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THE STORY
OF
EGIL SKALLAGRIMSSON:

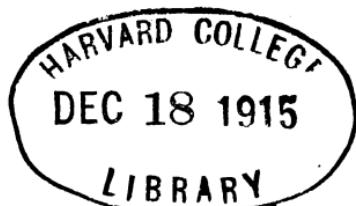
BEING
An Icelandic Family History of the
Ninth and Tenth Centuries,

TRANSLATED FROM THE ICELANDIC,

BY
REV. W. C. GREEN,
LATE FELLOW OF KING'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE;
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INTRODUCTION.

IT is now more than thirty years since Dasent by the story of Burnt Njal delighted many readers and awakened in England an interest in the Icelandic Sagas. The introduction to Burnt Njal treats ably and fully of Icelandic history and literature, pointing out their especial value to us Englishmen. And this the same author has further done in his introduction to Vigfusson's Dictionary. Other Sagas have since been made accessible in English: *e.g.*, the story of Gisli the outlaw, by Dasent; Grettir's Saga, by Magnusson and Morris; and recently some others in the series entitled 'The Saga Library.'

Dasent put before us the best first, for of Iceland's Sagas the Njala undoubtedly bears the palm. But the next best has hitherto not been open to English readers—the Egils-saga to wit. Second only to the Njala in interest and merit is the Egl, and second (in my judgment) after no long interval. For though no one character enlists our sympathy in Egil's story so much as does the wise and good Njal so undeservedly cut off, yet the whole story is in style and force little, if at all, inferior. Nay it has more variety of scene and adventure, more points of contact with history, than has the Njala; it is to Englishmen especially interesting, as one part of it is much concerned with England. The narrative takes us into many lands; all over Norway, to Sweden, to Finmark, and the lands beyond, Kvenland, Bjarmaland, the shores of the White Sea; in company with the Vikings we go 'the eastward way' to the Baltic, to Courland in Russia; we visit Holland, Friesland, Jutland;

westwards and southwestwards we cruise about Shetland, the Orkneys, Scotland; England is reached by our hero Egil; York is the scene of his most perilous venture; he comes even as far as London.

The earlier part of the Saga, the scene of which is in Norway, with the account of Harold Fairhair's obtaining sole dominion there, is of great interest, and agrees with other accounts of the same. It is well known that Harold's tyranny (as they deemed it) drove many Norsemen of good family to seek Iceland and freedom. Among these were Egil's grandfather and father. We have a full account of their settlement in the island, whither as yet few had gone, and where land was to be had for the taking, but hard work was needed. We read of these early pioneers' industries—their farming, smithying, fishing on sea and river, seal-hunting, whaling, egg-gathering. Minute descriptions there are of the island, particularly of its western coast, its firths, nesses, rivers, fells.

No reader of this Saga can for a moment doubt the truthfulness of the picture given of life and manners at that time. A seafaring race were those Norsemen, both for trade in their ships of burden and for freebooting in their long ships; bold and skilful mariners they are seen to be. We read of a winter sledging journey in one most adventurous episode. There are battles, some of great moment, by sea and by land. One of the latter, the battle of Vinheath, in England, is told with much detail, and is (one may venture to say) as vivid an account of a battle as can be found anywhere in any language. There are single combats or wagers of battle, about the manner and terms of which we learn much that is noteworthy. There are also lawsuits in Norway, and, towards the end of the story, one in Iceland, whence we learn that the emigrants carried out with them and established their civilization with all the machinery of courts and legal procedure. There is less litigation in the Egla than in the Njala, but few readers will regret this, for, if there be anything in the story of Burnt Njal which one would be inclined to skip, it is some of the long law-pleadings.

The home life of the North is in this Saga graphically set

INTRODUCTION

before us. We see the men at their banquets ; mighty drinkings they held, with curious manners and rules. There are feasts at harvest, at Yule-tide ; they exchange visits at each other's houses ; hospitality is universal ; weddings there are, burials. Of their halls, the arrangement thereof, their order of sitting, their armour hanging ready above the warriors, we can from scenes in this story form a complete idea. We witness their amusements, their trials of strength ; a certain game at ball is described in detail.

Of their religion perhaps we do not read so much in the Eglia as might be expected. They were still heathens, though Christianity was prevailing in the countries around. That the Norwegians and Icelanders were familiar with their own theology and mythology is, however, plain ; their knowledge of it is constantly assumed in the poetry. Of priests the Egilssaga tells us, and of temples, and one great religious gathering is described. There is not much of the marvellous or supernatural in this Saga : no ghost, as in Grettir's Saga. Some superstitions appear : a belief in magic and spells, in the force of runes graved rightly or wrongly. Several women are spoken of as possessing magic skill, especially queen Gunnhilda, who on one memorable occasion exercises all but fatally for Egil her power of shape-changing. There is one remarkable instance of a solemn spoken and written curse, with very curious accompaniments. But upon the whole little happens that is beyond fair probability, or that does not spring from natural causes. Although, as we have seen, Egil and his comrades were not Christians, the Christian faith is incidentally mentioned as prevailing in England, and towards the end of the Saga we read that Thorstein, Egil's youngest son, became eventually a Christian.

The characters in the Egilssaga are well marked and forcibly drawn. In the house of Kveldulf, old Kveldulf himself, Thorolf the elder, Skallagrim, Egil, stand forth as real men with characters well-sustained throughout. Outside the family king Harold is well drawn, the able ruler, generous in much, but suspicious, as a tyrant must needs be. His son Eric is violent, but weaker, and swayed by his wife Gunnhilda, who is to him somewhat as Jezebel

was to Ahab. Arinbjorn is perhaps the noblest character in the story, the brave, generous, true friend. But the reader will estimate these and others for himself; of the hero who gives his name to the Saga a few words will not be out of place. Egil certainly must have been a remarkable man. Strong in body beyond his fellows, he was no less uncommonly gifted in mind, a poet as well as a soldier. Brave he was even to foolhardiness, yet wary withal and prudent; full of resource in danger, never giving up the game however desperate; a born leader, liked and trusted by his men. His character has its unpleasant side; he was headstrong, brutal at times when provoked, determined to have his own way, and overbearing in pursuit of it. Yet there is nothing mean or little about him; he does not engage in petty quarrels, he helps or hinders kings and great chiefs. He is outspoken and truthful, and his ire is especially stirred by meanness and falsehood in others. To women he is pleasant and courteous, as appears on several occasions. For the sake of his friend Arinbjorn and his kin he risks his life more than once.

That the bad points in Egil's character are not screened is surely one proof of the truthfulness of the Saga-writer; a mere eulogist would have blazoned forth all his hero's noble exploits, but veiled the other side, and hardly would anyone inventing a fictitious character have put such dark blots in it. But some of Egil's faults were rather those of his time than of himself. A careful reading of the whole Saga leaves us with a more favourable opinion of Egil than we form at the beginning of his life. For most readers will (I think) at the first dislike Egil; they will agree with his father Skallagrim and his elder brother Thorolf, who had not much affection for the boy. But as the story goes on, one cannot but admire his bravery, his resource, his indomitable resolution, his readiness to face danger, not only for himself, but for others whom he really prized.

The Egla contains many wonderfully good descriptive passages of the fiords, sounds, and islands of the North. An instance is chapter xlv., which relates Egil's first escape from Eric. A most dramatic scene is that where Skallagrim

goes before king Harold in chapter xxv. So is chapter lxii, where Egil and Arinbjorn are before king Eric Bloodaxe in York. Very striking is the interview between Egil and his daughter Thorgerdr, after Bodvar's death, in chapter lxxxi. Looking at the vigour and beauty of the style in these and other passages, we agree with the judgment in Thordarson's preface, that the *Egilssaga* was put into writing 'in the golden age of Icelandic literature.' And for these excellencies we must remember to give due credit and admiration to the Saga-writer. For though he was (as is generally believed) describing real men, real scenes, real characters, yet it is not everyone who, having the matter to hand, can put it together and express it so well.

About the truthfulness and historical value of the *Egla* there has been some discussion and difference of opinion. Is it in the main a true family history, or a romance? How long after the events recorded was it written? And by whom? These questions have been debated by northern scholars, Icelanders and others. The balance of authority and reason appears to be very much in favour of the general truthfulness of the story. The writer surely wrote down the facts as he heard or read them, not departing from the truth as he knew it or believed it. But on this question let us hear what the northern editors say.

Finnur Jónsson (Copenhagen, 1888) gives his judgment thus:

1. The Saga in what concerns persons and events in Iceland and Norway may be considered true, with small and unimportant exceptions.
2. For what happens in other countries it cannot be reckoned quite trustworthy.
3. Its chronology is in several places faulty, which is not to be wondered at.
4. It shows extensive geographical knowledge, insight into Icelandic and Norse law and culture.
5. The composer had partly written sources of information, partly family traditions of the Moormen to go upon, with much of Egil's verses and poems.
6. He is a master in the art of telling a story and delineating character.
7. He must have lived on the Borgar-firth.'

The preface to Thordarson's edition says :

'The Saga agrees well with other Icelandic Sagas, and may be reckoned as one of the most truthful; but when it is considered that it was kept in men's memory for a very long time—the events happening before the year 1000, and the story not being put into writing till near the end of the twelfth century—naturally every syllable of it will not be true. Neither in this, however, nor in any of the best Icelandic Sagas do the writers thereof deliberately assert untruth or mean to exaggerate.'

To the authority and judgment of these scholars an Englishman can add little. Only, as regards historical events foreign to Iceland and Norway, it may be remarked that no one could reasonably expect Icelanders of the eleventh and twelfth centuries to be infallible about them. In the Egilssaga what is said about foreign countries appears generally like truth. What we read about England, *e.g.*, and what passed there at the beginning of Athelstan's reign, agrees fairly with what we know of that time from history; some facts are undoubtedly true, none palpably untrue, though there are details which present some difficulty. But these will be better discussed in a note on that part of the Saga.

The date of the writing of Egilssaga is put between 1160 and 1200; probably near to the latter date. In chapter xc. we read of the taking up of Egil's supposed bones in the time of Skapti the priest. He is known to have been priest from 1143 onwards. Thordarson's preface suggests as a possible author Einar Skulason. He was a descendant of Egil, being grandson of the grandson of Thorstein Egilsson; he travelled much, knew well both Norway and Iceland, and was a good skald; he lived till late in the twelfth century. But that he was the author is but a guess.

Of the Egilssaga there are several editions. For this translation the following have been used: The large edition, with a Latin translation (Havniæ, MDCCCLIX); Einar Thordarson's (Reykjavík, 1856); Finnur Jónsson's (Copenhagen, 1888). Also Petersen's Swedish translation (1862). The text of Thordarson's little book has been followed in the main; Jónsson's differs from it in many places, being

generally shorter. Into the critical merits of these texts I am not competent to enter; the variations are of no importance to the story or to an English reader.

The prose of the Saga presents few difficulties to a translator. Icelandic prose, as regards order of words, is simple, and runs naturally enough into English. The sentences are mostly short and plain. In *Egilssaga* the style for Icelandic is pronounced by good authorities to be of the best; the translator can only hope that in its English dress it may not have lost all its attractiveness.

Of the verse in this Saga, and of the principles followed in translating it, something must be said; for peculiar difficulties beset the translator of Icelandic verses. Icelandic poetry differs entirely from Icelandic prose. Whereas the prose is simple, the poetry is highly artificial. Especially so are the detached staves or stanzas sprinkled throughout the Sagas. Of such the *Egla* has a great number, mostly Egil's own verses; and, as he is accounted one of the best of Iceland's ancient skalds, they are an interesting part of the Saga and could not be omitted. But in rendering them into English one meets with perplexing difficulties.

These staves consist nearly always of eight lines each, made up of two sets of four lines, the sense being usually complete in each quatrain. As regards metre, the lines are short, about of a length, not exactly so in syllables, but alike in rhythm and number of accented syllables. No doubt more exact rules about their metre are discoverable and known to Icelanders, but for the English reader the above description will suffice. The lines do not rhyme, or very seldom do so, and (I believe) rhyme in these detached stanzas is looked on as a mark of a later date than the tenth century. The place of rhyme is taken by alliteration of initials. That is to say, in the second line must be repeated the same initial consonant that has been used twice (or at least once) in the first line, or else a vowel must be so repeated. Anyone familiar with old English or Saxon verses (such as occur in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, e.g., the battle of Brunanburh) will understand the kind of alliteration meant.

Now, a translator has to choose between keeping this

form as far as he may, or changing it into rhyme with strict syllabic metre. As the former method of alliteration with some license as to length of line by unaccented syllables allows of a closer rendering of the original, it has been preferred.

But there are several puzzles to solve in Icelandic verse. There is often a curiously complex order of words, an order that sometimes renders a sentence utterly unconstruable at first sight even to one accustomed to the involutions of Latin and German. Were it not for the consentient authority of Scandinavian interpreters, I could never have imagined words to be meant so out of the order in which they are written. To keep their rules of alliterative sound, the skalds broke those of grammatical sense. The subjoined examples (by no means extreme ones) will give an idea of the Icelandic practice in this kind.

(1) 'Now hath the lord of earth slain falls the land under the descendant of Ella forward in fight of rule head-stem three princes.'

Which being interpreted is: 'Now hath the lord of earth, forward in fight, head-stem, slain three princes: the land falls under the rule of the descendant of Ella.'

(2) 'Let listen pleased to the stream of long-haired friend of altars take heed thane of silence thy people the king's of mine.'

Interpreted: 'Let the king's thane listen pleased to the stream of my long-haired altar-friend (= to the stream of song from Odin); let the people take heed of silence.'

The consenting voice of three gives (with hardly a variation in detail) these explanations. Now, these examples in their original order sound much as if Scott had written in the opening of the 'Lady of the Lake':

'At eve had drunk where danced his fill
The stag the moon on Monan's rill.'

This feature of Icelandic verse plainly cannot be kept, nor is it worth keeping. One must presume that somehow the hearers (or most of them) did understand what was sung, but no English hearer or reader could understand his own language so treated. A translator must give up this artificial order. But this peculiarity, besides making the sense hard

to unravel, may also cause additional trouble to the translator, who has to make new alliterations in place of old ones, that were perhaps ready to hand, but have disappeared by the rearranging of the words into something intelligible.

But the most curious characteristic of Icelandic poetry and the most difficult to deal with is the 'kenning,' as it is called. It means 'a mark of recognition'; kennings are descriptive names or periphrases. Such phraseology we find, to some extent, in all ancient poetry, but it is most artificial in the Northern poets. It seems a principle with them seldom to call a thing or person by its plain name, but to use a periphrasis. These kennings are of very different kinds. Sometimes they are really poetical descriptions, figurative, but easily understood and appreciated, and apposite to the passage in which they occur. For instance, anyone can understand a sword in action being called a 'wound-snake' or 'wound-wolf,' arrows flying from the bow-string 'wound-bees,' a shield a 'rimmed moon,' a ship 'se-swan,' sea-horse 'sea-king's steed.' 'Willow-render' (tree-render) for wind recalls the *silvisraga flabra* of Lucretius. But some kennings are extraordinary, especially when compound, as they often are. 'Dale-fish,' for example, is a curious roundabout for 'serpent'; then built upon this we find 'dale-fish-mercy,' for the season that cheers or enlivens the serpent, *i.e.*, 'summer.' We know that 'it is the bright day that brings forth the adder,' but very cumbrous is this kenning used in a verse of the *Eglar* simply to mark the time of an exploit. Numerous are the kennings for 'gold,' 'man,' 'woman,' nor are these (as far as one can see) used with any reference to the fitness of each for the occasion.

Again, some of the kennings seem meant to be rather humorous than what we should call poetical, as when the head is 'hat-knoll,' 'hat-stall'; the eyes 'brow-pits'; the tongue 'song-pounder.' And certainly some were purposely enigmatical, meant to tax the ingenuity of the hearer to solve. Names of persons are hidden. Egil is supposed once to do this with the name of a woman; it is hidden so carefully that his friend Arinbjorn cannot discover it, nor have commentators satisfactorily found it yet. On another occasion Egil describes Arinbjorn by a kind of pun

as 'the bear' (*bjorn*) of the birchwood's terror (of *arin*, 'the hearth,' on which birchwood is burnt):

This fondness for wrapping up wisdom in riddles we see in Eastern nations. Solomon (Prov. i. 6) puts it as a desirable learning 'to understand a proverb and a figure, the words of the wise and their dark sayings' (marg. 'riddles'); the LXX. has *παραβολὴν καὶ σκοτεινὸν λόγον ῥήσεις τε σοφῶν καὶ αἰνίγματα*. There are phrases like Icelandic kennings in Solomon; e.g., in Eccles. xi. 3, 4, 'the keepers of the house, the strong men, the grinders, those that look out of the window,' are of this kind, as also perhaps some of those expressions that follow. And riddles of the older type are so. Take, for example, Samson's riddle, 'Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness.' What is this but describing what had happened with the kennings, 'eater' and 'strong' for lion, 'meat' and 'sweetness' for honey?

In some respects the use of certain epithets in ancient Greek poetry is like the use of kennings. We find in Homer stock epithets, names, titles, repeatedly occurring where they do not specially fit the passage. Men are 'articulating, enterprising' (*μέροπες, ἀλφησταί*); the earth is 'black, all-feeding, rye-giving' (*μέλαινα, πουλυβότειρα, ζείδωρος*); the sea is 'divine, fishful' (*δῖα, ἰχθυόεσσα*); kings and chiefs 'Jove's nurslings, blameless' (*διοτρεφέες, ἀμύμονες*), etc., without regard to the special circumstances. But in Greek with the epithet the noun is mostly expressed; whereas in Icelandic it has to be guessed.

Very many kennings are based on mythology. This is not only true of the names of the gods, but also of other persons and things; they are frequently described by periphrases which can only be explained from the Edda, and are therefore meaningless to those who are not well versed in the details of that same.

And now it will be seen that these various kennings present a double difficulty, first to understand, then to deal with in translation. Suppose them understood, still how shall they be rendered? When they are poetical figures appropriate to the passage they are fairly manageable, sometimes without change, sometimes by simile, sometimes as

epithet, adding the noun. But where they do not fit the matter in hand, they are, if closely rendered, barely intelligible ; to our notions they are unpoetical ; they will often spoil the spirit and meaning of the whole verse to an English reader by calling off his attention to a puzzle. The substance of the entire passage will be lost by too much particularity. They are cumbrous, there is no room in the text to make them really clear, and to be continually putting down obscurities and claiming space elsewhere in notes to explain them seems undesirable. Therefore I elected to give up many of the far-fetched kennings, putting the answer instead of the riddle where the riddle seemed hardly worth keeping. For one thing seemed most important in translating these staves, to make each stave fairly plain to be understood by English readers as it was presumably by Icelandic hearers. That my renderings will satisfy all I do not suppose, either all learned Northern critics or all English readers. Many of the original staves cannot be made to satisfy modern taste, and, indeed, they are of very unequal merit. Some of Egil's verses are of great force and spirit ; he had a true poetic vein, and depends less on artificialities than some of the Icelandic verse-writers ; but the merit and attractiveness of the Saga does not rest on these detached verses. Were they omitted most readers would not miss much. But to omit them I could not venture, so I have dealt with them as best I might.

Besides these scattered stanzas the Eglá contains Egil's three great poems. Jónsson, indeed, banishes these to an appendix. But there seems no doubt that they are genuine compositions of Egil, though perhaps not included in the Saga in its earliest form. It appeared, therefore, better to keep them in the place to which they have now by use a prescriptive right. I shall say no more of them here than that they are each remarkable in their way ; 'Sonatorrek,' for depth of feeling and poetry, I should rank first ; it is unlike the generality of Icelandic poems.

And now pass we to the actual matter and outline of the story, which naturally falls into three divisions.

I. The history of Kveldulf's family, especially of Thorolf, in Norway.

II. The settlement of Skallagrim in Iceland, the birth of Thorolf the younger, then of Egil, whose adventures (all out of Iceland) are told up to his final return when fifty years old.

III. Egil's later uneventful years in Iceland, his old age and death, and a brief notice of his descendants. The outline of the story is this:

✓ Kveldulf, a rich yeoman, marrying rather late in life, has two sons. The younger son, Skallagrim, stays at home with his father. Thorolf the elder goes freebooting. While these two are young men, Harold Fairhair is winning to himself the sole rule of Norway and putting down the petty kings. Kveldulf refuses to leave home and help in fight against Harold, yet will he not upon Harold's success take service under him. Thorolf, however, against his father's warning, does so, and wins favour and rank at court. Upon the death of his friend Bard he inherits his wealth and widow. Then two half-brothers of Bard's father claim part of the property. Being denied all share, they slander Thorolf to the king. Harold is by degrees brought to believe their charges; he deprives Thorolf of his honours and his inheritance from Bard, then seizes Thorolf's own ship and cargo. Whereupon Thorolf retaliates on the king's property. Then king Harold goes against him with a large force, burns his house, and in a desperate fight slays him.

After awhile Harold is willing to make some amends; but Kveldulf and Skallagrim refuse all overtures of reconciliation. They take what vengeance they can on some concerned in Thorolf's death, and resolve to seek Iceland. Kveldulf dies on the way, but his coffin is cast upon Iceland's shore, and found by the rest soon after their landing. Near this spot on the Borgar Firth Skallagrim settles. He and his company thrive. Two sons are born to him: Thorolf, and about ten years later Egil. Thorolf grows to be like his namesake and uncle; he soon takes to roving; visits Norway, where at the house of Thorir, his father's friend, he meets a son of Harold Fairhair, Eric, then but a boy. They strike up a friendship, which continues when Eric Bloodaxe becomes king; and Thorolf is much with Eric and queen Gunnhilda. After some years he returns to Iceland.

Meanwhile Egil has been growing up. As a child he shows no common wit and strength, but is wilful, unmanageable, agrees ill with his father, breaks out in acts of violence. He goes out with Thorolf on his next voyage to Norway ; he and Arinbjorn, Thorir's son, become friends. But Egil soon provokes the wrath of Eric and Gunnhilda ; Gunnhilda attempts his life ; Egil retaliates, and the brothers have to quit Norway. They seek England, serve under king Athelstan, win for him a battle in Northumberland, in which Thorolf falls. Egil, though promised great honours with Athelstan, goes to Norway to see after Thorolf's widow ; after awhile he marries her and returns to Iceland. On tidings of his wife's father's death he goes to Norway to claim her inheritance, which is unjustly and violently kept from him. Egil narrowly escapes from Eric's ships, slays the man who holds the property, also slays a son of Eric, and after solemnly cursing the king and queen returns to Iceland. He finds his father ageing much ; soon Skallagrim dies. And now Hacon, Eric's brother, foster-son of king Athelstan, is recalled to Norway as king, and Eric Bloodaxe is forced to flee. He with Arinbjorn goes to Scotland, then to Northumberland, of which he is made governor for Athelstan. Egil, resolving to revisit Athelstan in England, is wrecked at Humbermouth, within Eric's dominion. At once he rides to York, seeks out Arinbjorn, and they two go before Eric. Gunnhilda urges that Egil be put to death ; but for Arinbjorn's sake, after recital of his poem, he is spared. Going on to Athelstan, he is well received, and urged to stay ; but first he will go to Norway after his wife's property. From Hacon he wins a hearing, brings a suit against Earl Atli, the holder of the property : the matter is referred to wager of battle ; Atli is slain, whereupon Egil returns to Iceland ; he is there twelve years : sons and daughters are born to him. Athelstan dies soon after Egil's return to Iceland ; some years later Eric is killed in battle. Arinbjorn is again in Norway ; so Egil goes thither, is with him ; they go harrying in Saxland and Friesland, after which Arinbjorn joins Eric's sons in Denmark ; Egil returns to Thorstein, Arinbjorn's nephew, and he takes Thorstein's place in a winter expedition to

Vermaland to gather the king's tribute. From the perils of this he escapes ; then in spring sails out to Iceland, where he lives without further adventure.

His daughters get husbands : of his sons, Gunnar dies young of sickness ; Bodvar is drowned, aged about sixteen, on which loss Egil composes a poem ; and later one on Arinbjorn. Upon the death of Asgerdr, his wife, he leaves Borg, and retires to live at Mossfell with Grim and Thordisa his niece and step-daughter. Thorstein, Egil's youngest son, has a lawsuit with an encroaching neighbour ; the decision of this, referred to Egil, is about his last public act. But he lives on to be very old and blind, and dies of sickness.

Grim and Thorstein afterwards become Christians. Many famous men sprang from Skallagrim and Egil. Bones believed to be Egil's were found about a hundred and sixty years after his death, and removed to the churchyard at Mossfell.

Through the whole Saga, as a connecting thread, runs the family feud between the house of Kveldulf and the house of Harold. Old Kveldulf's prophecy that Harold will work scathe on his kin comes true by Thorolf's death. Vengeance for him is taken, and the feud sleeps awhile ; nay, against his father Harold's warning, Eric accepts the younger Thorolf as a friend. But Egil, going to Norway, by his headstrong deeds reawakens the quarrel, being perhaps nothing loth to do so, and following Skallagrim's mood, who had scorned king Eric's gift sent by the hand of Thorolf. The enmity is bitter between Egil and Eric stirred by Gunnhilda ; Egil however wins through all perils, and, even as Harold Fairhair, chief of the feud on the other side, had done, at last dies in his bed full of years.

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF THE CHIEF EVENTS IN THE SAGA OR CONNECTED WITH IT.

- A.D. 850. Birth of Harold Fairhair.
- ” 860. Harold Fairhair comes to the throne.
- ” 870. He becomes sole king of Norway.
- ” 870 (*circa*). Thorolf, being about twenty-four years old, goes to Harold.

A.D. 872. Battle of Hafrsfirth.
 " 877. Death of Thorolf.
 " 878. Skallagrim emigrates to Iceland.
 " 886 (*circa*). Thorolf Skallagrimsson born.
 " 898-901 (*circa*). Egil born.
 " 898-902. Bjorn's abduction of Thora, marriage, visit to Iceland.
 " 903. Feast at Yngvar's. Thorolf and Bjorn go to Norway.
 " 904-14. Thorolf's freebootings. Among these is put Eric's expedition to Bjarmaland, but this probably was in 918.
 " 906. Bjorn's second marriage.
 " 906-15. Egil's childhood and boyhood in Iceland.
 " 914. Thorolf returns to Iceland.
 " 915. Thorolf goes to Norway with Egil; twelve years pass before Egil returns.
 " 916-23. Freebootings of Thorolf and Egil.
 " 923. Thorolf marries Asgerdr. Slaying of Bard.
 " 924. Fight with Eystein Skreyja. Thorolf and Egil go to England.
 " 925. Battle of Vinheath, where Thorolf falls.
 " 926. Egil goes to Norway. Marries Asgerdr next winter.
 " 927. Returns to Iceland; is there several years, during which probably his eldest daughter is born.
 " 933. He goes to Norway. Harold Fairhair dies. Egil has a suit with Bergonund; returns to Iceland. Skallagrim dies this winter.
 " 935. Hacon now king in Norway. Eric is in Northumberland. Egil wrecked there. Höfudlausn. Egil with Athelstan.
 " 937. He goes to Norway; fights with Atli; returns to Iceland.
 " 938-50. Egil is in Iceland. He has five children in all.
 " 940. Death of king Athelstan.
 " 950 (*circa*). Eric falls in battle. Arinbjorn is back in Norway; Egil goes to him.

A.D. 951. They harry eastwards; Arinbjorn then joins Eric's sons. Egil next winter goes to Vermland.

„ 952-60. Marriages of Egil's step-daughter and daughters.

„ 960. Bodvar's drowning. Sona-torrek.

„ 961. Hacon's death.

„ 962. Epic poem on Arinbjorn.

„ 967 (*circa*). Thorstein's marriage.

„ 973 (*circa*). Asgerdr dies. Egil retires to Mossfell. Thorstein lives at Borg.

„ 975-8. Dispute between Thorstein and Steinar.

„ 975. Earl Hacon becomes king. In his 'early days' Egil is past eighty.

„ 983-8. Egil's death.

„ 1000. Grim and Thorstein are baptized.

„ 1143. Skapti priest. Egil's bones found.

CHAPTER I.

Of Kveldulf and his sons.

HERE was a man named Ulf, son of Bjalf, and Hallbera, daughter of Ulf the fearless ; she was sister of Hallbjorn Half-giant in Hrafniſta, and he the father of Kettle Hæing. Ulf was a man so tall and strong that none could match him, and in his youth he roved the seas as a freebooter. In fellowship with him was one Kari of Berdla, a man of renown for strength and daring ; he was a Berserk. Ulf and he had one common purse, and were the dearest friends.

But when they gave up freebooting, Kari went to his estate at Berdla, being a man of great wealth. Three children had Kari, one son named Eyvind Lambi, another Aulvir Hnuf, and a daughter Salbjorg, who was a most beautiful woman of a noble spirit. Her did Ulf take to wife, and then he too went to his estates. Wealthy he was both in lands and chattels ; he took baron's rank as his forefathers had done, and became a great man. It is told of Ulf that he was a good householder ; it was his wont to rise up early, and then go round among his labourers or where his smiths were, and to overlook his stock and fields, and at times he would talk with such as needed his counsel, and good counsel he could give in all things, for he was very wise. But everyday as evening drew on he became sullen, so that few could come to speak with him. He was an evening sleeper, and it was commonly said that he was very shape strong. He was called Kveldulf.

Kveldulf and his wife had two sons, the elder was named Thorolf, the younger Grim ; these, when they grew up, were both tall men and strong, as was their father. (But Thorolf was most comely as well as doughty, favouring his mother's kin ; very cheery was he, liberal, impetuous in everything, a good trader, winning the hearts of all men. Grim was swarthy, ill-favoured, like his father both in face and mind ; he became a good man of business ; skilful was he in wood and iron, an excellent smith. In the winter he often went to the herring fishing, and with him many house-carles.)

But when Thorolf was twenty years old, then he made him ready to go a harrying. Kveldulf gave him a long-ship, and Kari of Berdla's sons, Eyvind and Aulvir, resolved to go on that voyage, taking a large force and another long-ship ; and they roved the seas in the summer, and got them wealth, and had a large booty to divide. For several summers they were out roving, but stayed at home in winter with their fathers. Thorolf brought home many costly things, and took them to his father and mother ; thus they were well-to-do both for possessions and honour. Kveldulf was now well stricken in years, and his sons were grown men.



CHAPTER II.

Of Aulvir Hnuf.

A UDBJORN was then king over the Firthfolk ; there was an earl of his named Hroald, whose son was Thorir. Atli the Slim was then an earl, he dwelt at Gaula ; he had sons—Hallstein, Holmstein, and Herstein ; and a daughter, Solveig the Fair. It happened one autumn that much people were gathered at Gaula for a sacrificial feast, then saw Aulvir Hnuf Solveig and courted her ; he afterwards asked her to wife. But the earl thought him an unequal match and would not give her. Whereupon Aulvir composed many love-songs, and thought so much of Solveig that he left freebooting, but Thorolf and Eyvind Lambi kept it on.

CHAPTER III.

The beginning of the rule of Harold Fairhair.

HAROLD, son of Halfdan Swarthy, was heir after his father. He had bound himself by this vow, not to let his hair be cut or combed till he were sole king over Norway, wherefore he was called Harold Shockhead. So first he warred with the kings nearest to him and conquered them, as is told at length elsewhere. Then he got possession of Upland; thence he went northwards to Throndheim, and had many battles there before he became absolute over all the Thmonds. After that he purposed to go north to Naumdale to attack the brothers Herlaug and Hrollaug, kings of Naumdale. But when these brothers heard of his coming, Herlaug with twelve men entered the sepulchral mound which they had caused to be made (they were three winters at the making), and the mound then was closed after them. But king Hrollaug sank from royalty to earldom, giving up his kingdom and becoming a vassal of Harold. So Harold gained the Naumdalesmen and Halogaland, and he set rulers over his realm there. Then went he southwards with a fleet to Mæra, where he fought a battle with king Hunthiof, and gained the victory, Hunthiof being slain. Thus he won North Mæra and Raumsdale. But Solvi Bandy-legs, Hunthiof's son, escaped thence, and going to king Arnvid, in South Mæra, he asked help, with these words:

‘Though this danger now touches us, before long the same will come to you; for Harold, as I ween, will hasten hither when he has enthralled and oppressed after his will all in North Mæra and Raumsdale. Then will the same need be upon you as was upon us, to guard your wealth and liberty, and to try everyone from whom you may hope for aid. And I now offer myself with my forces against this tyranny and wrong. But, if you make the other choice, you must do as the Naumdalesmen have done, and go of your own will into slavery, and become Harold's thralls. My father thought it victory to die a king with honour

rather than become in his old age another king's subject. Thou, as I judge, wilt think the same, and so will others who have any high spirit and claim to be men of valour.'

By such persuasion king Arnvid was determined to gather his forces and defend his land. He and Solvi made a league, and sent messengers to Audbjorn, king of the Firthfolk, that he should come and help them. Audbjorn, after counsel taken with friends, consented, and bade cut the war-arrow and send the war-summons throughout his realm, with word to his nobles that they should join him.

But when the king's messengers came to Kveldulf and told him their errand, and that the king would have Kveldulf come to him with all his house-carles, then answered he :

' It is my duty to the king to take the field with him if he have to defend his own land, and there be harrying against the Firthfolk ; but this I deem clean beyond my duty, to go north to Mæra and defend their land. Briefly ye may say when ye meet your king that Kveldulf will sit at home during this rush to war, nor will he gather forces nor leave his home to fight with Harold Shockhead. For I think that he has a whole load of good-fortune where our king has not a handful.'

The messengers went back to the king, and told him how their errand had sped ; but Kveldulf sat at home on his estates.



CHAPTER IV.

Battle of king Harold and Audbjorn.

KING AUDBJORN went with his forces northwards to Mæra ; there he joined king Arnvid and Solvi Bandy-legs, and altogether they had a large host. King Harold also had come from the north with his forces, and the armies met inside Solskel. There was fought a great battle, with much slaughter in either host. Of the Mærian forces fell the kings Arnvid and Audbjorn, but Solvi escaped, and afterwards became a great sea-rover, and wrought much scathe on Harold's kingdom, and was nicknamed Bandy-legs.

On Harold's side fell two earls, Asgaut and Asbjorn, and two sons of earl Hacon, Grjotgard and Herlaug, and many other great men. After this Harold subdued South Mæra. Vemund Audbjorn's brother still retained the Firthfolk, being made king. It was now autumn, and king Harold was advised not to go south in autumn-tide. So he set earl Rognvald over North and South Mæra and Raumsdale, and kept a numerous force about himself.

That same autumn the sons of Atli set on Aulvir Hnuf at his home, and would fain have slain him. They had such a force that Aulvir could not withstand them, but fled for his life. Going northwards to Mæra, he there found Harold, and submitted to him, and went north with the king to Throndheim, and he became most friendly with him, and remained with him for a long time thereafter, and was made his skald.

In the winter following earl Rognvald went the inner way by the Eid-sea southwards to the Firths. Having news by spies of the movements of king Vemund, he came by night to Naust-dale, where Vemund was at a banquet, and, surrounding the house, burnt within it the king and ninety men. After that Kari of Berdla came to earl Rognvald with a long-ship fully manned, and they two went north to Mæra. Rognvald took the ships that had belonged to Vemund and all the chattels he could get. Kari of Berdla then went north to king Harold at Throndheim, and became his man.

Next spring king Harold went southwards along the coast with a fleet, and subdued firths and fells, and arranged for men of his own to rule them. Earl Hroald he set over the Firthfolk. King Harold was very careful, when he had gotten new peoples under his power, about barons and rich landowners, and all those whom he suspected of being at all likely to raise rebellion. Every such man he treated in one of two ways: he either made him become his liege-man, or go abroad; or (as a third choice) suffer yet harder conditions, some even losing life or limb. Harold claimed as his own through every district all patrimonies, and all land tilled or untilled, likewise all seas and freshwater lakes. All landowners were to be his tenants, as also all that

worked in the forest, salt-burners, hunters and fishers by land and sea, all these owed him duty. But many fled abroad from this tyranny, and much waste land was then colonized far and wide, both eastwards in Jamtaland and Helsingjaland, and also the West lands, the Southern isles, Dublin in Ireland, Caithness in Scotland, and Shetland. And in that time Iceland was found.



CHAPTER V.

The king's message to Kveldulf.

KING HAROLD lay with his fleet in the Firths, whence he sent messengers round the land to such as had not come to him, but with whom he thought he had business. The messengers came to Kveldulf, and were well received. They set forth their errand, said that the king would have Kveldulf come to him.

'He has heard,' said they, 'that you are a man of renown and high family. You will get from him terms of great honour, for the king is very keen on this, to have with him such as he hears are men of mark for strength and bravery.'

Kveldulf answered that he was an old man, not fit for war or to be out in warships. 'I will now,' said he, 'sit at home and leave serving kings.'

Upon this the messengers said, 'Then let your son go to the king; he is a tall man and a likely warrior. The king will make you a baron,' said they to Grim, 'if you will serve him.'

'I will be made baron under none,' said Grim, 'while my father lives; he, while he lives, shall be my liege-lord.'

The messengers went away, and when they came to the king told him all that Kveldulf had said before them. Whereat the king looked sullen, but he spoke little; these men, he said, were proud, or what were they aiming at? Aulvir Hnuf was standing near, and he bade the king not be wroth. 'I will go,' said he, 'to Kveldulf; and he will

consent to come to you, as soon as he knows that you think it a matter of moment.'

So Aulvir went to Kveldulf and told him that the king was wroth, and it would not go well unless one of the two, father or son, came to the king ; he said, too, that he would get them great honour from the king if they would but pay homage. Further he told them at length, as was true, that the king was liberal to his men both in money and honours.

Kveldulf said, *My foreboding is that I and my sons shall get no luck from this king : and I will not go to him. But if Thorolf returns this summer, he will be easily won to this journey, as also to be made the king's man. Say you this to the king, that I will be his friend, and will keep to his friendship all who heed my words ; I will also hold the same rule and authority from his hand that I held before from the former king, if he will that it continue so still, and I will see how I and the king agree.'*

Then Aulvir went back and told the king that Kveldulf would send him his son, and he (said Aulvir) would suit better ; but he was not then at home. The king let the matter rest. In the summer he went inland to Sogn, but in autumn made ready to go northwards to Thronheim.



CHAPTER VI.

Thorolf resolves to serve the king.

THOROLF KVELDULF'S son and Eyyvind Lambi came home from sea-roving in the autumn. Thorolf went to his father, and father and son had some talk together. Thorolf asked what had been the errand of the men whom Harold sent thither. Kveldulf said the king had sent them with this message, that Kveldulf or else one of his sons should become his man.

‘How answeredst thou ?’ said Thorolf.

I spake what was in my mind, that I would never take service with king Harold ; and ye two will both do the

same, if I may counsel : this I think will be the end, that we shall reap ruin from that king.'

'That,' said Thorolf, 'is quite contrary to what my mind tells me, for I think I shall get from him much advancement. And on this I am resolved, to seek the king, and become his man ; and this I have learnt for true, that his guard is made up of none but valiant men. To join their company, if they will have me, seems to me most desirable ; these men are in far better case than all others in the land. And 'tis told me of the king that he is most generous in money gifts to his men, and not slow to give them promotion and to grant rule to such as he deems meet for it. Whereas I hear this about all that turn their backs upon him and pay him not homage with friendship, that they all become men of nought, some flee abroad, some are made hirelings. It seems wonderful to me, father, in a man so wise and ambitious as thou art, that thou wouldest not thankfully take the dignity which the king offered thee. But if thou thinkest that thou hast prophetic foresight of this, that we shall get misfortune from this king, and that he will be our enemy, then why didst thou not go to battle against him with that king in whose service thou wert before ? Now, methinks it is most unreasonable neither to be his friend nor his enemy.'

'It went,' said Kveldulf, 'just as my mind foreboded, that they marched not to victory who went northwards to fight with Harold Shockhead in Mæra ; and equally true will this be, that Harold will work much scathe on my kin. But thou, Thorolf, wilt take thine own counsel in thine own business ; nor do I fear, though thou enter into the company of Harold's guards, that thou wilt not be thought capable and equal to the foremost in all proofs of manhood. Only beware of this, keep within bounds, nor rival thy betters ; thou wilt not, I am sure, yield to others overmuch.'

But when Thorolf made him ready to go, Kveldulf accompanied him down to the ship and embraced him, with wishes for his happy journey and their next merry meeting.



CHAPTER VII.

Of Bjorgolf, Brynjolf, Bard, and Hildirida.

HERE was a man in Halogaland named Bjorgolf; he dwelt in Torgar. He was a baron, powerful and wealthy; in strength, stature, and kindred half hill-giant. He had a son named Brynjolf, who was like his father. Bjorgolf was now old, and his wife was dead; and he had given over into his son's hands all business, and found him a wife, Helga, daughter of Kettle Hæing of Hrafnista. Their son was named Bard; he soon grew to be tall and handsome, and became a right doughty man.

One autumn there was a banquet where many men were gathered, Bjorgolf and his son being there the most honourable guests. In the evening they were paired off by lot to drink together, as the old custom was. Now, there was at the banquet a man named Hogni, owner of a farm in Leka, a man of great wealth, very handsome, shrewd, but of low family, who had made his own way. He had a most beautiful daughter, Hildirida by name; and it fell to her lot to sit by Bjorgolf. They talked much together that evening, and the fair maiden charmed the old man. Shortly afterwards the banquet broke up.

That same autumn old Bjorgolf journeyed from home in a cutter of his own, with thirty men aboard. He came to Leka, and twenty of them went up to the house, while ten guarded the ship. When they came to the farm, Hogni went out to meet him, and made him welcome, invited him and his comrades to lodge there, which offer Bjorgolf accepted, and they entered the room. But when they had doffed their travelling clothes and donned mantles, then Hogni gave orders to bring in a large bowl of beer; and Hildirida, the daughter of the house, bare ale to the guests.

Bjorgolf called to him Hogni the goodman, and said, 'My errand here is this: I will have your daughter to go home with me, and will even now make with her a hasty wedding.'

Hogni saw no choice but to let all be as Bjorgolf would ; so Bjorgolf bought her with an ounce of gold, and they became man and wife, and Hildirida went home with Bjorgolf to Torgar. Brynjolf showed him ill-pleased at this business. Bjorgolf and Hildirida had two sons ; one was named Harek, the other Hrærek.

Soon after this Bjorgolf died ; but no sooner was he buried than Brynjolf sent away Hildirida and her sons. She went to her father at Leka, and there her sons were brought up. They were good-looking, small of stature, naturally shrewd, like their mother's kin. They were commonly called Hildirida's sons. Brynjolf made little count of them, and did not let them inherit aught of their father's. Hildirida was Hogni's heiress, and she and her sons inherited from him and dwelt in Leka, and had plenty of wealth. Bard, Brynjolf's son, and Hildirida's sons were about of an age.

Bjorgolf and his son Brynjolf had long held the office of going to the Finns, and collecting the Finns' tribute.

Northwards in Halogaland is a firth called Vefsni, and in the firth lies an island called Alost, a large island and a good, and in this a farm called Sandness. There dwelt a man named Sigurd, the richest man thereabouts in the north ; he was a baron, and wise of understanding. He had a daughter named Sigridr ; she was thought the best match in Halogaland, being his only child and sole heiress to her father. Bard Brynjolf's son journeyed from home with a cutter and thirty men aboard northwards to Alost, and came to Sigurd at Sandness. There he declared his business, and asked Sigridr to wife. This offer was well received and favourably answered, and so it came about that Bard was betrothed to the maiden. The marriage was to take place the next summer. Bard was then to come north for the wedding.



CHAPTER VIII.

Of Bard and Thorolf.

KING HAROLD had that summer sent word to the men of power that were in Halogaland, summoning to him such as had not come to him before. Brynjolf resolved to go, and with him Bard his son ; and in the autumn they went southwards to Throndheim, and there met the king. He received them most gladly. Brynjolf was made a baron of the king's ; the king also gave him large grants beside what he had before. He gave him withal the right of journey to the Finns, with the king's business on the fells and the Finn traffic. Then Brynjolf went away home to his estate, but Bard remained, and was made one of the king's guard.

Of all his guard the king most prized his skalds ; they occupied the second high seat. Of these Audun Ill-skald sat innermost, being the oldest ; he had been skald to Halfdan Swarthy, king Harold's father. Next to him sat Thorbjorn Raven, then Aulvir Hnuf, and next to him was placed Bard ; he was there by-named Bard the White or Bard the Strong. He was in honour with everyone there, but between him and Aulvir Hnuf was a close friendship.

That same autumn came to king Harold Thorolf Kveldulf's son and Eyyvind Lambi, Kari of Berdla's son, and they were well received. They brought thither a swift twenty-benched long-ship well manned, which they had before used in sea-roving. They and their company were placed in the guest-hall ; but when they had waited there till they thought it a fit time to go before the king, Kari of Berdla and Aulvir Hnuf went in with them. They greeted the king. Then said Aulvir Hnuf, 'Here is come Kveldulf's son, whom I told thee in the summer Kveldulf would send. His promise to thee will now stand fast ; for here thou canst see true tokens that he will be thy friend in all when he hath sent his son hither to take service with thee, a stalwart man as thou mayest see. Now, this is the boon

craved by Kveldulf and by us all, that thou receive Thorolf with honour and make him a great man with thee.'

The king answered his words well, promising that so he would do, 'If,' said he, 'Thorolf proves himself as accomplished in deed as he is right brave in look.'

After this Thorolf was made of the king's household, and one of his guard.

But Kari of Berdla and his son Eyvind Lambi went back south in the ship which Thorolf had brought north, and so home to Kari's farm. Thorolf remained with the king, who appointed him a seat between Aulvir Hnuf and Bard; and these three struck up a close friendship. And all men said of Thorolf and Bard that they were a well-matched pair for comeliness, stature, strength, and all doughty deeds. And both were in high favour with the king.

But when winter was past and summer came, then Bard asked leave to go and see to the marriage promised to him the summer before. And when the king knew that Bard's errand was urgent, he allowed him to go home. Then Bard asked Thorolf to go north with him, saying (as was true) that he would meet there many of his kin, men of renown, whom he had not yet seen or known. Thorolf thought this desirable, so they got leave from the king for this; then they made them ready, took a good ship and crew, and went their way.

When they came to Torgar, they sent word to Sigurd that Bard would now see to that marriage on which they had agreed the summer before. Sigurd said that he would hold to all that they had arranged; so they fixed the wedding-day, and Bard with his party were to come north to Sandness. At the appointed time Brynjolf and Bard set out, and with them many great men of their kin and connexions. And it was as Bard had said, that Thorolf met there many of his kinsmen that he had not known before. They journeyed to Sandness, and there was held the most splendid feast. And when the feast was ended, Bard went home with his wife, and remained at home through the summer, and Thorolf with him.

In the autumn they came south to the king, and were

with him another winter. During that winter Brynjolf died ; and when Bard learnt that the inheritance there was open for him, he asked leave to go home. This the king granted, and before they parted Bard was made a baron, as his father had been, and held of the king all those same grants that Brynjolf had held. Bard went home to his estate, and at once became a great chief ; but Hildirida's sons got no more of the heritage than before. Bard had a son by his wife ; he was named Grim. Meanwhile Thorolf was with the king, and in great honour.



CHAPTER IX.

Battle in Hafr's Firth.

KING HAROLD proclaimed a general levy, and gathered a fleet, summoning his forces far and wide through the land. He went out from Throndheim, and bent his course southwards, for he had heard that a large host was gathered throughout Agdir, Rogaland, and Hordaland, assembled from far, both from the inland parts above, and from the east out of Vik, and many great men were there met who purposed to defend their land from the king. Harold held on his way from the north, with a large force, having his guards on board. In the forecastle of the king's ship were Thorolf Kveldulfsson, Bard the White, Kari of Berdla's sons, Aulvir Hnuf and Eyyvind Lambi, and in the prow were twelve Berserks of the king.

The fleets met south in Rogaland in Hafr's Firth. There was fought the greatest battle that king Harold had had, with much slaughter in either host. The king set his own ship in the van, and there the battle was most stubborn, but the end was that king Harold won the victory. Thorir Longchin, king of Agdir, fell there, but Kjotvi the wealthy fled with all his men that could stand, save some that surrendered after the battle. When the roll of Harold's army was called, many were they that had fallen, and many were sore wounded. Thorolf was badly wounded, Bard

even worse ; nor was there a man unwounded in the king's ship before the mast, except those whom iron bit not—to wit the Berserks.

Then the king had his men's wounds bound up, and thanked them for their valour, and gave them gifts, adding most praise where he thought it most deserved. He promised them also further honour, naming some to be steersmen, others forecastle men, others bow-sitters. This was the last battle king Harold had within the land ; after this none withstood him ; he was supreme over all Norway.

The king saw to the healing of his men, whose wounds gave them hope of life, as also to the burial of the dead with all customary honours. Thorolf and Bard lay wounded. Thorolf's wounds began to heal, but Bard's proved mortal. Then Bard had the king called to him, and spoke thus :

' If it so be that I die of these wounds, then I would ask this of thee, that I may myself name my heir.'

To this when the king assented, then said he :

' I will that Thorolf my friend and kinsman take all my heritage, both lands and chattels. To him, also, will I give my wife and the bringing up of my son, because I trust him for this above all men.'

This arrangement he made fast, as the law was, with the leave of the king. Then Bard died, and was buried, and his death was much mourned. Thorolf was healed of his wounds, and followed the king, and had won great glory.

In the autumn the king went north to Throndheim. Then Thorolf asked to go north to Halogaland, to see after those gifts which he had received in the summer from his kinsman Bard. The king gave leave for this, adding a message and tokens that Thorolf should take all that Bard had given him, showing that the gift was with the counsel of the king, and that he would have it so. Then the king made Thorolf a baron, and granted him all the rights which Bard had had before, giving him the journey to the Finns on the same terms. He also supplied to Thorolf a good long-ship, with tackling complete, and had everything made ready for his journey thence in the best possible way. So Thorolf set out, and he and the king parted with great affection.

But when Thorolf came north to Torgar, he was well received. He told them of Bard's death ; also how Bard had left him both lands and chattels, and her that had been his wife ; then he showed the king's order and tokens. When Sigridr heard these tidings, she felt her great loss in her husband, but with Thorolf she was already well acquainted, and knew him for a man of great mark ; and this promise of her in marriage was good, and besides there was the king's command. So she and her friends saw it to be the best plan that she should be betrothed to Thorolf, unless that were against her father's mind. Thereupon Thorolf took all the management of the property, and also the king's business.

Soon after this Thorolf started with a long-ship and about sixty men, and coasted northwards, till one day at eventide he came to Sandness in Alost ; there they moored the ship. And when they had raised their tent, and made arrangements, Thorolf went up to the farm buildings with twenty men. Sigurd received him well, and asked him to lodge there, for there had been great intimacy between them since the marriage connection between Sigurd and Bard. Then Thorolf and his men went into the hall, and were there entertained. Sigurd sat and talked with Thorolf, and asked tidings. Thorolf told of the battle fought that summer in the south, and of the fall of many *mén* whom Sigurd knew well, and withal how Bard his son-in-law had died of wounds received in the battle. This they both felt to be a great loss. Then Thorolf told Sigurd what had been the covenant between him and Bard before he died, and he declared also the orders of the king, how he would have all this hold good, and this he showed by the tokens.

After this Thorolf entered on his wooing with Sigurd, and asked Sigridr, his daughter, to wife. Sigurd received the proposal well ; he said there were many reasons for this : first, the king would have it so ; next, Bard had asked it ; and further he himself knew Thorolf well, and thought it a good match for his daughter. Thus Sigurd was easily won to grant this suit ; whereupon the betrothal was made, and the wedding was fixed for the autumn at Torgar.

Then Thorolf went home to his estate, and his comrades

with him. There he prepared a great feast, and bade many thereto. Of Thorolf's kin many were present, men of renown. Sigurd also came thither from the north with a long-ship and a chosen crew. Numerously attended was that feast, and it was at once seen that Thorolf was free-handed and munificent. He kept about him a large following, whereof the cost was great, and much provision was needed; but the year was good, and needful supplies were easily found.

During that winter Sigurd died at Sandness, and Thorolf was heir to all his property; this was great wealth.

Now the sons of Hildirida came to Thorolf, and put in the claim which they thought they had on the property that had belonged to their father Bjorgolf. Thorolf answered them thus:

‘This I knew of Brynjolf, and still better of Bard, that they were men so generous that they would have let you have of Bjorgolf’s heritage what share they knew to be your right. I was present when ye two put in this same claim on Bard, and I heard what he thought, that there was no ground for it, for he called you illegitimate.’

Harek said that they would bring witnesses that their mother was duly bought with payment.

‘It is true that we did not at first treat of this matter with Brynjolf our brother—it was a case of sharing between kinsmen—but of Bard we hoped to get our dues in every respect, though our dealings with him were not for long. Now however this heritage has come to men who are in nowise our kin, and we cannot be altogether silent about our wrong; but it may be that, as before, might will so prevail that we get not our right of thee in this, if thou refuse to hear the witness that we can bring to prove us honourably born.’

Thorolf then answered angrily:

‘So far am I from thinking you legitimate heirs that I am told your mother was taken by force, and carried home as a captive.’

After that they left talking together.



CHAPTER X.

Thorolf in Finmark.

IN the winter Thorolf took his way up to the fells with a large force of not less than ninety men, whereas before it had been the wont of the king's stewards to have thirty men, and sometimes fewer. He took with him plenty of wares for trading. At once he appointed a meeting with the Finns, took of them the tribute, and held a fair with them. All was managed with goodwill and friendship, though not without fear on the Finns' side. Far and wide about Finmark did he travel; but when he reached the fells eastward, he heard that the Kylfings were come from the east, and were there for trading with the Finns, but in some places for plunder also. Thorolf set Finns to spy out the movements of the Kylfings, and he followed after to search for them, and came upon thirty men in one den, all of whom he slew, letting none escape. Afterwards he found together fifteen or twenty. In all they slew near upon a hundred, and took immense booty, and returned in the spring after doing this.

Thorolf then went to his estates at Sandness, and remained there through the spring. He had a long-ship built, large, and with a dragon's head, fitted out in the best style; this he took with him from the north. Thorolf gathered great stores of what there was in Halogaland, employing his men after the herrings and in other fishing; seal-hunting there was too in abundance, and egg-gathering, and all such provision he had brought to him. Never had he fewer freedmen about his home than a hundred; he was open-handed and liberal, and readily made friends with the great, and with all that were near him. A mighty man he became, and he bestowed much care on his ships, equipment, and weapons.

CHAPTER XI.

The king feasts with Thorolf.

KING HAROLD went that summer to Halogaland, and banquets were made ready against his coming, both where his estates were, and also by barons and powerful landowners. Thorolf prepared a banquet for the king at great cost ; it was fixed for when the king should come there. To this he bade a numerous company, the best men that could be found. The king had about three hundred men with him when he came to the banquet, but Thorolf had five hundred present. Thorolf had caused a large granary to be fitted up where the drinking should be, for there was no hall large enough to contain all that multitude. And all around the building shields were hung.

The king sate in the high seat ; but when the foremost bench was filled, then the king looked round, and he turned red, but spoke not, and men thought they could see he was angry. The banquet was magnificent, and all the viands of the best. The king, however, was gloomy ; he remained there three nights, as had been intended. On the day when the king was to leave Thorolf went to him, and offered that they should go together down to the strand. The king did so, and there, moored off the land, floated that dragon-ship which Thorolf had had built, with tent and tackling complete. Thorolf gave the ship to the king, and prayed the king to believe that he had gathered such numbers for this end, to show the king honour, and not to enter into rivalry with him. The king took Thorolf's words well, and then became merry and cheerful. Many added their good word, saying (as was true) that the banquet was most splendid, and the farewell escort magnificent, and that the king gained much strength by such men. Then they parted with much affection.

The king went northwards through Halogaland as he had purposed, and returned south as summer wore on. He went to yet other banquets there that were prepared for him.



CHAPTER XII.

Hildirida's sons talk with Harold.

HILDIRIDA'S sons went to the king and bade him to a three nights' banquet. The king accepted their bidding, and fixed when he would come. So at the appointed time he and his train came thither. The company was not numerous, but the feast went off very well, and the king was quite cheerful. Harek entered into talk with the king, and their talk turned on this, that he asked about the king's journeys in those parts during the summer.

The king answered his questions, and said that all had received him well, each after his means.

'Great will have been the difference,' said Harek, 'and at Torgar the company at the banquet will have been the most numerous.'

The king said that it was so.

Harek said: 'That was to be looked for, because on that banquet most was spent; and thou, O king, hadst great luck in matters so turning out that thy life was not endangered. The end was as was likely; thou wert very wise and very fortunate; for thou at once suspectedst all was not for good on seeing the numerous company there gathered; but (as I am told) thou madest all thy men remain armed constantly and keep watch and ward night and day.'

The king looked at him and said: 'Why speakest thou thus, Harek? What canst thou tell of this?'

Harek answered: 'May I speak with permission what I please?'

'Speak,' said the king.

'This I judge,' said Harek, 'that thou wouldest not deem it to be well, if thou, O king, hearest every one's words, what men say when speaking their minds freely at home, how they think that it is a tyranny thou exercisest over all people. But the plain truth is, O king, that to rise against thee the people lack nothing but boldness and a leader. Nor is it wonderful in a man like Thorolf that he thinks himself above everyone; he wants not for strength and

comeliness ; he keeps a guard round him like a king ; he has wealth in plenty, even though he had but what is truly his, but besides that he holds others' property equally at his disposal with his own. Thou, too, hast bestowed on him large grants, and he had now made all ready to repay them with ill. For this is the truth that I tell thee : when it was learnt that thou wert coming north to Halogaland with no more force than three hundred men, the counsel of people here was that an army should assemble and take thy life, O king, and the lives of all thy force. And Thorolf was head of these counsels, and it was offered him that he should be king over the Halogalanders and Naumdalesmen. Then he went in and out of each firth and round all the islands, and got together every man he could find and every weapon, and it was no secret that this army was to muster for battle against king Harold. But the truth is, O king, that though thou hadst somewhat less force than those who met thee, yet the farmer folk took fright when they saw thy fleet. Then this counsel was adopted, to meet thee with friendly show and bid thee to a banquet : but it was intended, when thou wert well drunk and lying asleep, to attack thee with fire and weapon. And here is a proof whether I am rightly informed ; ye were led into a granary because Thorolf was loth to burn up his new and beautiful hall ; and a further proof is that every room was full of weapons and armour. But when all their devices against thee miscarried, then they chose the best course they could ; they hushed up their former purpose. And I doubt not that all may deny this counsel, because few, methinks, know themselves guiltless, were the truth to come out. Now this is my counsel, O king, that thou keep Thorolf near thee, and let him be in thy guard, and bear thy standard, and be in the forecastle of thy ship ; for this duty no man is fitter. Or if thou wilt have him to be a baron, then give him a grant southwards in the Firths, where are all his family : thou mayest then keep an eye on him, that he make not himself too great for thee. But the business here in Halogaland put thou into the hands of men who are moderate and will serve thee faithfully, and have kinsfolk here, men whose relatives have had the same work here before. We two brothers are ready and willing for such service as thou wilt

use us in ; our father long had the king's business here, and it prospered in his hands. It is difficult, O king, to place men as managers here, because thou wilt seldom come hither thyself. The strength of the land is too little to need thy coming with an army, yet thou must not come hither again with few followers, for there are here many disloyal people.'

The king was very angry at these words, but he spoke quietly, as was always his wont when he heard tidings of great import. He asked whether Thorolf were at home at Torgar. Harek said this was not likely.

'Thorolf,' said he, 'is too wise to be in the way of thy followers, O king, for he must guess that all will not be so close but thou wilt get to know these things. He went north to Alost as soon as he heard that thou wert on thy way south.'

The king spoke little about this matter before other men ; but it was easy to see that he inclined to believe the words that had been spoken.

After this the king went his way, Hildirida's sons giving him honourable escort with gifts at parting, while he promised them his friendship. The brothers made themselves an errand into Naumdale, and so went round about as to cross the king's path now and again ; he always received their words well.



CHAPTER XIII.

Thorgils goes to the king.

HERE was a man named Thorgils Yeller, a house-carle of Thorolf's, honoured above all the rest of his household ; he had followed Thorolf in his roving voyages as forecastle man and standard-bearer. He had been in Hafri's Firth, in the fleet of king Harold, and was then steering the very ship that Thorolf had used in his roving. Thorgils was strong of body and right bold of heart ; the king had bestowed on him friendly gifts after the battle, and promised him his friendship. Thorgils was manager at Torgar, and bore rule there when Thorolf was not at home.

Before Thorolf went away this time he had counted over all the king's tribute that he had brought from the fells, and he put it in Thorgils' hand, bidding him convey it to the king, if he himself came not home before the king returned south. So Thorgils made ready a large ship of burden belonging to Thorolf, and put the tribute on board, and taking about twenty men sailed southward after the king, and found him in Naumdale.

But when Thorgils met the king he gave him greeting from Thorolf, and said that he was come thither with the Finns' tribute sent by Thorolf. The king looked at him, but answered never a word, and all saw that he was angry. Thorgils then went away, thinking to find a better time to speak with the king ; he sought Aulvir Hnuf, and told him what had passed, and asked him if he knew what was the matter.

'That do I not,' said he ; 'but this I have marked, that, since we were at Leka, the king is silent every time Thorolf is mentioned, and I suspect he has been slandered. This I know of Hildirida's sons, that they were long in conference with the king, and it is easy to see from their words that they are Thorolf's enemies. But I will soon be certain about this from the king himself.'

Thereupon Aulvir went to the king, and said : 'Here is come Thorgils Yeller thy friend, with the tribute which is thine ; and the tribute is much larger than it has been before, and far better wares. He is eager to be on his way ; be so good, O king, as to go and see it ; for never have been seen such good gray furs.'

The king answered not, but he went to where the ship lay. Thorgils at once set forth the furs and showed them to the king. And when the king saw that it was true, that the tribute was much larger and better, his brows somewhat cleared, and Thorgils got speech with him. He brought the king some bearskins which Thorolf sent him, and other valuables besides, which he had gotten upon the fells. So the king brightened up, and asked tidings of the journey of Thorolf and his company. Thorgils told it all in detail.

Then said the king : 'Great pity is it Thorolf should be unfaithful to me and plot my death.'

Then answered many who stood by, and all with one

mind, that it was a slander of wicked men if such words had been spoken, and Thorolf would be found guiltless. The king said he would prefer to believe this. Then was the king cheerful in all his talk with Thorgils, and they parted friends.

But when Thorgils met Thorolf he told him all that had happened.



CHAPTER XIV.

Thorolf again in Finmark.

THAT winter Thorolf went again to Finmark, taking with him about a hundred men. As before, he held a fair with the Finns, and travelled far and wide over Finmark. But when he reached the far east, and his coming was heard of, then came to him some Kvens, saying that they were sent by Faravid, king of Kvenland, because the Kiriales were harrying his land ; and his message was that Thorolf should go thither and bear him help ; and further that Thorolf should have a share of the booty equal to the king's share, and each of his men as much as two Kvens. With the Kvens the law was that the king should have one-third as compared with his men when the booty was shared, and beyond that, as reserved for him, all bearskins and sables. Thorolf put this proposal before his men, giving them the choice to go or not ; and the more part chose to venture it, as the prize was so great. Thus it was decided that they should go eastwards with the messengers.

Finmark is a wide tract ; it is bounded westwards by the sea, wherefrom large firths run in ; by sea also northwards and round to the east ; but southwards lies Norway ; and Finmark stretches along nearly all the inland region to the south, as also does Halogaland outside. But eastwards from Naundale is Jamtaland, then Helsingjaland and Kvenland, then Finland, then Kirialaland ; along all these lands to the north lies Finmark, and there are wide inhabited fell-districts, some in dales, some by lakes. The lakes of Finmark are wonderfully large, and by the lakes there are extensive forests. But high fells lie behind from end to end of the Mark, and this ridge is called Keels.

But when Thorolf came to Kvenland and met king Faravid, they made them ready for their march, being three hundred of the king's men and a fourth hundred Norsemen. And they went by the upper way over Finmark, and came where the Kiriales were on the fell, the same who had before harried the Kvens. These, when they were aware of the enemy, gathered themselves and advanced to meet them, expecting victory as heretofore. But, on the battle being joined, the Norsemen charged furiously forwards, bearing shields stronger than those of the Kvens; the slaughter turned to be in the Kiriales' ranks—many fell, some fled. King Faravid and Thorolf took there immense wealth of spoil, and returned to Kvenland, whence afterwards Thorolf and his men came to Finmark, he and Faravid parting in friendship.

Thorolf came down from the fell to Vefsnir; then went first to his farm at Sandness, stayed there awhile, and in spring went with his men north to Torgar.

But when he came there, it was told him how Hildirida's sons had been that winter at Throndheim with king Harold, and that they would not spare to slander Thorolf with the king; and it was much questioned what grounds they had had for their slander. Thorolf answered thus: 'The king will not believe this, though such lies be laid before him; for there are no grounds for my turning traitor to him, when he has done me much good and no evil. And so far from wishing to do him harm (though I had the choice), I would much rather be a baron of his than be called king, when some other fellow-countryman might rise and make me his thrall.'



CHAPTER XV.

King Harold and Harek.

HILDIRIDA'S sons had been that winter with king Harold, and in their company twelve men of their own household and neighbours. The brothers were often talking with the king, and they still spoke in the

same way of Thorolf. Harek asked : 'Didst thou like well, O king, the Finns' tribute which Thorolf sent thee ?'

'I did,' said the king.

'Then wouldest thou have been surprised,' said he, 'if thou hadst received all that belonged to thee ! But it was far from being so ; Thorolf kept for himself the larger share. He sent thee three bearskins, but I know for certain that he kept back thirty that were by right thine ; and I guess it was the same with other things. This will prove true, O king, that, if thou put the stewardship into the hand of myself and my brother, we shall bring thee more wealth.'

And to all that they said about Thorolf their comrades bore witness, wherefore the king was exceeding angry.

CHAPTER XVI.

Thorolf and the king.

IN the summer Thorolf went south to king Harold at Thronheim, taking with him all the tribute and much wealth besides, and ninety men well arrayed. When he came to the king, he and his were placed in the guest-hall and entertained magnificently.

On the morrow Aulvir Hnuf went to his kinsman Thorolf ; they talked together, Aulvir saying that Thorolf was much slandered, and the king gave ear to such tales. Thorolf asked Aulvir to plead his cause with the king, 'for,' said he, 'I shall be short-spoken before the king if he choose rather to believe the lies of wicked men than truth and honesty which he will find in me.'

The next day Aulvir came to see Thorolf, and told him he had spoken on his business with the king ; 'but,' said he, 'I know no more than before what is in his mind.'

'Then must I myself go to him,' said Thorolf.

He did so ; he went to the king where he sat at meat, and when he came in he greeted the king. The king accepted his greeting, and bade them serve him with drink. Thorolf said that he had there the tribute belonging to the

king from Finmark ; 'and yet a further portion of booty have I brought as a present to thee, O king. And what I bring will, I know, owe all its worth to this, that it is given out of gratitude to thee.'

The king said that he could expect nought but good from Thorolf, 'because,' said he, 'I deserve nought else ; yet men tell two tales of thee as to thy being careful to win my approval.'

'I am not herein justly charged,' said Thorolf, 'if any say I have shown disloyalty to thee. This I think, and with truth : That they who speak such lying slanders of me will prove to be in nowise thy friends, but it is quite clear that they are my bitter enemies ; 'tis likely, however, that they will pay dearly for it if we come to deal together.'

Then Thorolf went away.

But on the morrow Thorolf counted out the tribute in the king's presence ; and when it was all paid, he then brought out some bearskins and sables, which he begged the king to accept. Many of the bystanders said that this was well done and deserved friendship. The king said that Thorolf had himself taken his own reward. Thorolf said that he had loyally done all he could to please the king. 'But if he likes it not,' said he, 'I cannot help it : the king knows, when I was with him and in his train, how I bore myself ; it is wonderful to me if the king thinks me other now than he proved me to be then.'

The king answered : 'Thou didst bear thyself well, Thorolf, when thou wert with us ; and this, I think, is best to do still, that thou join my guard, bear my banner, be captain over the guard ; then will no man slander thee, if I can oversee night and day what thy conduct is.'

Thorolf looked on either hand where stood his house-carles ; then said he : 'Loth were I to deliver up these my followers : about thy titles and grants to me, O king, thou wilt have thine own way, but my following I will not deliver up while my means last, though I manage at my own sole cost. My request and wish, O king, is this, that thou come and visit me at my home, and then hear word of men whom thou trustest, what witness they bear to me in this matter ; thereafter do as thou findest proof to warrant.'

The king answered and said that he would not again accept entertainment from Thorolf ; so Thorolf went out, and made ready to return home.

But when he was gone, the king put into the hands of Hildirida's sons his business in Halogaland which Thorolf had before had, as also the Finmark journey. The king claimed ownership of the estate at Torgar, and of all the property that Brynjolf had had ; and all this he gave into the keeping of Hildirida's sons. The king sent messengers with tokens to Thorolf to tell him of this arrangement, whereupon Thorolf took the ships belonging to him, put on board all the chattels he could carry, and with all his men, both freedmen and thralls, sailed northwards to his farm at Sandness, where he kept up no fewer men and no less state than before.



CHAPTER XVII.

Hildirida's sons in Finmark and at Harold's court.

HILDIRIDA'S sons took the business in Halogaland ; and none gainsaid this because of the king's power, but Thorolf's kinsmen and friends were much displeased at the change. The two brothers went on the fell in the winter, taking with them thirty men. To the Finns there seemed much less honour in these stewards than when Thorolf came, and the money due was far worse paid.

That same winter Thorolf went up on the fell with a hundred men ; he passed on at once eastwards to Kvenland and met king Faravid. They took counsel together, and resolved to go on the fell again as in the winter before ; and with four hundred men they made a descent on Kirialaland, and attacked those districts for which they thought themselves a match in numbers, and harrying there took much booty, returning up to Finmark as the winter wore on. In the spring Thorolf went home to his farm, and then employed his men at the fishing in Vagar, and some in herring-fishing, and had the take of every kind brought to his farm.

Thorolf had a large ship, which was waiting to put to sea. It was elaborate in everything, beautifully painted down to the sea-line, the sails also carefully striped with blue and red, and all the tackling as elaborate as the ship. Thorolf had this ship made ready, and put aboard some of his house-carles as crew; he freighted it with dried fish and hides, and ermine and gray furs too in abundance, and other peltry such as he had gotten from the fell; it was a most valuable cargo. This ship he bade sail westwards for England to buy him clothes and other supplies that he needed; and they, first steering southwards along the coast, then stretching across the main, came to England. There they found a good market, laded the ship with wheat and honey and wine and clothes, and sailing back in autumn with a fair wind came to Hordaland.

That same autumn Hildirida's sons carried the tribute to the king. But when they paid it the king himself was present and saw. He said:

‘Is this tribute now paid all that ye took in Finmark?’

‘It is,’ they answered.

‘Less by far,’ said the king, ‘and much worse paid is the tribute now than when Thorolf gathered it; yet ye said that he managed the business ill.’

‘It is well, O king,’ said Harek, ‘that thou hast considered how large a tribute should usually come from Finmark, because thus thou knowest how much thou losest, if Thorolf waste all the tribute before thee. Last winter we were in Finmark with thirty men, as has been the wont of thy stewards heretofore. Soon after came Thorolf with a hundred men, and we learnt this, that he meant to take the lives of us two brothers and all our followers, his reason being that thou, O king, hadst handed over to us the business that he wished to have. It was then our best choice to shun meeting him, and to save ourselves: therefore we quickly left the settled districts, and went on the fell. But Thorolf went all round Finmark with his armed warriors; he had all the trade, the Finns paid him tribute, and he hindered thy stewards from entering Finmark. He means to be made king over the north there, both over Finmark and Halogaland: and the wonder is that thou wilt

listen to him in anything whatever. Herein may true evidence be found of Thorolf's ill-gotten gains from Finmark ; for the largest merchant ship in Halogaland was made ready for sea at Sandness in the spring, and all the cargo on board was said to be Thorolf's. It was laden mostly, I think, with gray furs, but there would be found there also bearskins and sables more than Thorolf brought to thee. And with that ship went Thorgils Yeller, and I believe he sailed westwards for England. But if thou wilt know the truth of this, set spies on the track of Thorgils when he comes eastwards ; for I fancy that no trading-ship in our days has carried such store of wealth. And I am telling thee what is true, O king, when I say that to thee belongs every penny on board.'

All that Harek said his companions confirmed, and none there ventured to gainsay.



CHAPTER XVIII.

Thorolf's ship is taken.

HERE were two brothers named Sigtrygg Swiftfarer and Hallvard Hardfarer, kinsmen of king Harold on the mother's side ; from their father, a wealthy man, they had inherited an estate in Hising. Four brothers there were in all ; but Thord and Thorgeir, the two younger, were at home, and managed the estate. Sigtrygg and Hallvard carried all the king's messages, both within and without the land, and had gone on many dangerous journeys, both for putting men out of the way and confiscating the goods of those whose homes the king ordered to be attacked. They kept about them a large following ; they were not generally in favour, but the king prized them highly. None could match them at travelling, either on foot or on snow-shoes ; in voyaging also they were speedier than others—valiant men they were, and very wary.

These two men were with the king when those things happened that have just been told. In the autumn the king

went to a banquet in Hordaland. And one day he summoned to him the brothers Hallvard and Sigtrygg, and when they came he bade them go with their following and spy after the ship which Thorgils had taken westward to England in the summer.

‘Bring me,’ said he, ‘the ship and all that is in it, except the men; let them go their way in peace, if they do not try to defend the ship.’

The brothers made them ready for this, and, taking each one his long-ship, went to seek Thorgils, and learnt that he was come from the west, and had sailed northwards along the coast. Northwards after him went they, and found him in Fir Sound. They knew the ship at once, and laid one of their ships on the seaward side of her, while some of them landed, and thence went out on to the ship by the gangways. Thorgils’ crew, apprehending no danger, made no defence; they found out nothing till many armed men were aboard, and so they were all seized, and afterwards put on shore weaponless, with nothing but the clothes they wore. But Hallvard’s men drew out the gangways, loosed the cables, and towed out the ship; then turned them about, and sailed southwards along the coast till they met the king, to whom they brought the ship and all that was in it. And when the cargo was unloaded, the king saw that it was great wealth, and what Harek had said was no lie.

But Thorgils and his comrades got conveyance, and went to Kveldulf and his son, and told of the misadventure of their voyage, yet were they well received. Kveldulf said all was tending to what he had foreboded, that Thorolf would not in the end have good luck in his friendship with king Harold.

‘And I care little,’ said he, ‘for Thorolf’s money loss in this, if worse does not come after; but I misdoubt, as before, that Thorolf will not rightly rate his own means against the stronger power with which he has to deal.’

And he bade Thorgils say this to Thorolf:

‘My counsel is that you go away out of the land, for maybe you will do better for yourself if you serve under the king of England, or of Denmark, or of Sweden.’

Then he gave Thorgils a rowing-cutter with tackling complete, a tent also, and provisions, and all things needful

for their journey. So they departed, and stayed not their journey till they came to Thorolf and told him all that had happened.

Thorolf took his loss cheerfully, and said that he should not be short of money ; 'tis good,' said he, 'to be in partnership with a king.' He then bought meal and all that he needed for the maintenance of his people ; his house-carles must for awhile, he said, be less bravely attired than he had purposed. Some lands he sold, some he mortgaged, but he kept up all expenses as before ; he had no fewer men with him than last winter, nay, rather more. And as to feasts and friends entertained at his house, he had more means for all this than before. He stayed at home all that winter.



CHAPTER XIX.

Thorolf retaliates.

WHEN spring came, and the snow and ice were loosed, then Thorolf launched a large warship of his own, and he had it made ready, and equipped his house-carles, taking with him more than a hundred men ; and a goodly company they were, and well weaponed. And when a fair wind blew, Thorolf steered southwards along the coast till he came to Byrda ; then they held an outer course outside the islands, but at times through channels between hill-slopes. Thus they coasted on southwards, and had no tidings of men till they came eastwards to Vik. There they heard that king Harold was in Vik, meaning in the summer to go into Upland. The people of the country knew nothing of Thorolf's voyage. With a fair wind he held on south to Denmark, and thence into the Baltic, where he harried through that summer, but got no good booty. In the autumn he steered back from the east to Denmark, at the time when the fleet at Eyrar was breaking up. In the summer there had been, as was usual, many ships from Norway. Thorolf let all these vessels sail past, and did not show himself. One day at eventide he sailed into Mostrar-

sound, where in the haven was a large ship of burden that had come from Eyrar. The steersman was named Thorir-Thruma ; he was a steward of king Harold's, manager of his farm at Thruma, a large farm in which the king used to make a long stay when he was in Vik. Much provision was needed for this farm, and Thorir had gone to Eyrar for this, to buy a cargo, malt, wheat, and honey ; and much wealth of the king's had he for that end. Thorolf made for this ship, and offered Thorir and his crew the choice to defend themselves, but, as they had no force to make defence against such numbers, they yielded. The ship with all its freight Thorolf took, but Thorir he put out on an island.

Then he sailed northwards along the coast with both the ships ; but when they came to the mouth of the Elbe, they lay there and waited for night. And when it was dark, they rowed their long-ship up the river and stood in for the farm-buildings belonging to Hallvard and Sigtrygg. They came there before daybreak, and formed a ring of men round the place, then raised a war-whoop and wakened those within, who quickly leapt up to their weapons. Thorgeir at once fled from his bedchamber. Round the farmhouse were high wooden palings : at these Thorgeir leapt, grasping with his hand the stakes, and so swung himself out of the yard. Thorgils Yeller was standing near ; he made a sweep with his sword at Thorgeir, and cut off his hand along with the fence-stake. Then Thorgeir escaped to the wood, but Thord, his brother, fell slain there, and more than twenty men. Thorolf's band plundered and burnt the house, then went back down the river to the sea.

With a fair wind they sailed north to Vik ; there again they fell in with a large merchant-ship belonging to men of Vik, laden with malt and meal. For this ship they made ; but those on board, deeming they had no means of defence, yielded, and were disarmed and put on shore, and Thorolf's men, taking the ship and its cargo, went on their way.

Thorolf had now three ships, with which he sailed westwards by Fold. Then they took the high road of the sea to Lidandisness, going with all despatch, but making raid and lifting cattle on ness and shore. Northwards from Lidandisness they held a course further out, but pillaged

wherever they touched land. But when Thorolf came over against the Firths, then he turned his course inward, and went to see his father Kveldulf, and there they were made welcome. Thorolf told his father what had happened in his summer voyage ; he stayed there but a short time, and Kveldulf and his son Grim accompanied him to the ship.

But before they parted Thorolf and his father talked together, and Kveldulf said : ' I was not far wrong, Thorolf, in telling thee, when thou wentest to join king Harold's guard, that neither thou nor we thy kindred would in the long run get good-fortune therefrom. Now thou hast taken up the very counsel against which I warned thee ; thou matchest thy force against king Harold's. But though thou art well endowed with valour and all prowess, thou hast not luck enough for this, to play on even terms with the king—a thing wherein no one here in the land has succeeded, though others have had great power and large force of men. And my foreboding is that this is our last meeting : it were in the course of nature from our ages that thou shouldst overlive me, but I think it will be otherwise.'

After this Thorolf embarked and went his way. And no tidings are told of his voyage till he arrived home at Sandness, and caused to be conveyed to his farm all the booty he had taken, and had his ship set up upon land. There was now no lack of provision to keep his people through the winter. Thorolf stayed on at home with no fewer men than in the winter before.



CHAPTER XX.

Skallagrim's marriage.

THREE was a man named Yngvar, powerful and wealthy. He had been a baron of the former kings. But after Harold came to the throne, Yngvar sate at home and served not the king. Yngvar was married and had a daughter named Bera. Yngvar dwelt in the Firths. Bera was his only child and heiress. Grim Kveldulf's son

asked Bera to wife, and the match was arranged. Grim took Bera in the winter following the summer when Thorolf had parted from him and his father.

Grim was then twenty-five years old, and was now bald, wherefore he was henceforth called Skallagrim. He had then the management of all the farms belonging to his father and himself and of all the produce, though Kveldulf was yet a hale and strong man. They had many freedmen about them, and many men who had grown up there at home and were about Skallagrim's equals in age. Men of prowess and strength they were mostly, for both father and son chose strong fellows to be their followers, and trained them after their mind. Skallagrim was like his father in stature and strength, as also in face and temper.



CHAPTER XXI.

Hallvard and his brother go after Thorolf.

KING HAROLD was in Vik while Thorolf was harrying, and in the autumn he went to Upland, and thence northward to Throndheim, where he stayed through the winter with a large force. Sigtrygg and Hallvard were with him: they had heard what Thorolf had done at their house on Hising, what scathe he had wrought on men and property. They often reminded the king of this, and withal how Thorolf had plundered the king and his subjects, and had gone about harrying within the land. They begged the king's leave that they two brothers might go with their usual following and attack Thorolf in his home.

The king answered thus: 'Ye may think ye have good cause for taking Thorolf's life, but I doubt your fortune falls far short of this work. Thorolf is more than your match, brave and doughty as ye may deem yourselves.'

The brothers said that this would be put to the proof, if the king would grant them leave; they had often run great risk against men on whom they had less to avenge, and generally they had won the day.

And when spring came, and men made ready to go their

several ways, then did Hallvard and his brother again urge their request that they might go and take Thorolf's life. So the king gave them leave. 'And I know,' he said, 'ye will bring me his head and many costly things withal when ye come back ; yet some do guess that if ye sail north ye will both sail and row south.'

They made them ready with all speed, taking two ships and two hundred men ; and when they were ready they sailed with a north-east wind out of the firth, but that is a head-wind for those coasting northward.



CHAPTER XXII.

Death of Thorolf Kveldulfsson.

KING HAROLD was at Hlada when the brothers went away. Immediately after this the king made him ready with all haste, and embarked his force on four ships, and they rowed up the firth, and so by Beitis-sea inwards to the isthmus of Elda. There he left his ships behind, and crossed the isthmus northwards to Naumdale. The king there took ships belonging to the landowners, and embarked his force on them, having with him his guard ; four hundred men they were. Six ships he had well equipped both with weapons and men. They encountered a fresh head-wind, and rowed night and day, making what progress they could. The night was then light enough for travel.

On the evening of a day after sunset they came to Sandness, and saw lying there opposite the farm a long-ship with tent spread, which they knew to be Thorolf's. He was even then purposing to sail away, and had bidden them brew the ale for their parting carousal. The king ordered his men to disembark and his standard to be raised. It was but a short way to the farm buildings.

Thorolf's watchmen sate within drinking, and were not gone to their posts ; not a man was without ; all sate within drinking. The king had a ring of men set round the hall : they then shouted a war-whoop, and a war-blast was blown on the king's trumpet. On hearing which Thorolf's men

sprang to their weapons, for each man's weapons hung above his seat. The king caused some to make proclamation at the door, bidding women, children, old men, thralls, and bondmen to come out. Then came out Sigridr the mistress, and with her the women that were within, and the others to whom permission was given. Sigridr asked if the sons of Kari of Berdla were there. They both came forward and asked what she woudl of them.

'Lead me to the king,' said she.

They did so. But when she came to the king, she said : 'Will anything, my lord, avail to reconcile thee and Thorolf?'

The king answered : 'If Thorolf will yield him to my mercy, then shall he have life and limb, but his men shall undergo punishment according to the charges against them.'

Upon this Aulvir Hnuf went to the room, and had Thorolf called to speak with him, and told him what terms the king offered them.

Thorolf answered that he would not take of the king compulsory terms or reconciliation. 'Bid thou the king allow us to go out, and then leave we things to go their own course.'

The king said : 'Set fire to the room ; I will not waste my men by doing battle with him outside ; I know that Thorolf will work us great man-scathe if he come out, though he has fewer men than we.'

So fire was set to the room, and it soon caught, because the wood was dry and the walls tarred and the roof thatched with birch-bark. Thorolf bade his men break up the wainscoting and get gable-beams, and so burst through the plank-ing ; and when they got the beams, then as many men as could hold on to it took one beam, and they rammed at the corner with the other beam-end so hard that the clasps flew out, and the walls started asunder, and there was a wide outlet.

First went out Thorolf, then Thorgils Yeller, then the rest one after another. Fierce then was the fight ; nor for awhile could it be seen which had the better of it, for the room guarded the rear of Thorolf's force. The king

lost many men before the room began to burn ; then the fire attacked Thorolf's side, and many of them fell. Now Thorolf bounded forwards and hewed on either hand ; small need to bind the wounds of those who encountered him. He made for where the king's standard was, and at this moment fell Thorgils Yeller. But when Thorolf reached the shield-wall, he pierced with a stroke the standard-bearer, crying, 'Now am I but three feet short of my aim.' Then bore at him both sword and spear ; but the king himself dealt him his death-wound, and he fell forward at the king's feet. The king called out then, and bade them cease further slaughter ; and they did so.

After this the king bade his men go down to the ships. To Aulvir Hnuf and his brother he said :

'Take ye Thorolf your kinsman and give him honourable burial ; bury also the other men who have fallen, and see to the binding of the wounds of those who have hope of life ; but let none plunder here, for all this is my property.'

This said, the king went down to his ships, and most of his force with him ; and when they were come on board men began to bind their wounds. The king went round the ship and looked at men's wounds ; and when he saw a man binding a surface-wound, he said : 'Thorolf gave not that wound ; his weapon bites far otherwise ; few, methinks, bind the wounds which he gave ; and great loss have we in such men.'

As soon as day dawned the king had his sail hoisted, and sailed south as fast as he could. As the day wore on, they came upon many rowing-vessels in all the sounds between the islands ; the forces on board them had meant to join Thorolf, for spies of his had been southwards as far as Naumdale, and far and wide about the islands. These had got to know how Hallvard and his brother were come from the south with a large force meaning to attack Thorolf. Hallvard's company had constantly met a head-wind, and had waited about in various havens till news of them had gone the upper way overland, and Thorolf's spies had become aware of it, and this gathering of force was on this account.

The king sailed before a stong wind till he came to

Naumdale; there he left the ships behind, and went by land to Thronheim, where he took his own ships that he had left there, and thence stood out to Hlada. These tidings were soon heard, and reached Hallvard and his men where they lay. They then returned to the king, and their voyage was much mocked at.

The brothers Aulvir Hnuf and Eyvind Lambi remained awhile at Sandness and saw to the burial of the slain. To Thorolf's body they gave all the customary honours paid at the burial of a man of wealth and renown, and set over him a memorial stone. They saw also to the healing of the wounded. They arranged also the house with Sigridr; all the stock remained, but most of the house-furniture and table-service and clothing was burnt. And when this was done, they went south and came to king Harold at Thronheim, and were with him for awhile.

They were sad, and spoke little with others. And it was so that one day the brothers went before the king, and Aulvir said :

‘This permission we brothers claim of thee, O king, that we go home to our farms; for such things have happened here that we have no heart to share drink and seat with those who drew weapon on our kinsman Thorolf.’

The king looked at them, and answered curtly :

‘I will not grant you this; ye shall be here with me.’

They went back to their place.

Next day, as the king sat in the audience hall, he had the brothers called to him, and said :

‘Now shall ye know of that your business which ye began with me, craving to go home. Ye have been some while here with me, and have borne you well, and always done your duty. I have thought well of you in everything. Now will I, Eyvind, that thou go north to Halogaland. I will give thee in marriage Sigridr of Sandness, her that Thorolf had to wife; and I will bestow on thee all the wealth that belonged to Thorolf; thou shalt also have my friendship if thou canst keep it. But Aulvir shall remain with me; for his skill as skald I cannot spare him.’

The brothers thanked the king for the honour granted to them, and said that they would willingly accept it.

Then Eyvind made him ready for the journey, getting a good and suitable ship. The king gave him tokens for this matter. His voyage sped well, and he came north to Aloft and Sandness. Sigridr welcomed him; and Eyvind then showed her the king's tokens and declared his errand, and asked her in marriage, saying that it was the king's message that he should obtain this match. But Sigridr saw that her only choice, as things had gone, was to let the king rule it. So the arrangement was made, and Eyvind married Sigridr, receiving with her the farm at Sandness and all the property that had been Thorolf's. Thus Eyvind was a wealthy man.

The children of Eyvind and Sigridr were Fid Squinter, father of Eyvind Skald-spoiler, and Geirlaug, whom Sighvat Red had to wife. Fid Squinter married Gunnhilda, daughter of earl Halfdan. Her mother was Ingibjorg, daughter of king Harold Fairhair. Eyvind Lambi kept the king's friendship so long as they both lived.



CHAPTER XXIII.

The slaying of Hildirida's sons.

THERE was a man named Kettle Hæing, son of Thorkel earl of Naumdale, and of Hrafnilda daughter of Kettle Hæing of Hrafnista. He was a man of wealth and renown; he had been a fast friend of Thorolf Kveldulf's son, and was his near kinsman. He had been out on that expedition when forces gathered in Halogaland with intent to join Thorolf, as has been written above. But when king Harold went south, and men knew of Thorolf's slaying, then they called a gathering.

Hæing took with him sixty men, and turned to Torgar. Hildirida's sons were there, and few men with them. He went up to the farm, and made an attack on them; and there fell Hildirida's sons, and most of those who were there; and Hæing and his company took all the wealth they could lay hands on. After that Hæing took two ships

of burden, the largest he could get, and put on board all the wealth belonging to him that he could carry ; his wife and children also he took, and all the men that had been with him in the late work. And when they were ready and the wind blew fair, they sailed out to sea. A man named Baug, Hæing's foster-brother, of good family and wealthy, steered the second ship.

A few winters before Ingjolf and Hjorleif had gone to settle in Iceland ; their voyage was much talked about, and 'twas said there was good choice of land there. So Hæing sailed west over the sea to seek Iceland. And when they saw land, they were approaching it from the south. But because the wind was boisterous, and the surf ran high on the shore, and there was no haven, they sailed on westwards along the sandy coast. And when the wind began to abate, and the surf to calm down, there before them was a wide river-mouth. Up this river they steered their ships, and lay close to the eastern shore thereof. That river is now called Thjors-river ; its stream was then much narrower and deeper than it is now. They unloaded their ships, then searched the land eastward of the river, bringing their cattle after them. Hæing remained for the first winter on the eastern bank of the outer Rang-river.

But in the spring he searched the land eastwards, and then took land between Thjors-river and Mark-fleet, from fell to firth, and made his home at Hofi by east Rang-river. Ingunn his wife bare a son in this spring after their first winter, and the boy was named Hrafn. And though the house there was pulled down, the place continued to be called Hrafn-toft.

Hæing gave Baug land in Fleet-lithe, down from Mark-river to the river outside Breidabolstead ; and he dwelt at Lithe-end. To his shipmates Hæing gave land or sold it for a small price, and these first settlers are called land-takers. Hæing had sons Storolf, Herjolf, Helgi, Vestar ; they all had land. Hrafn was Hæing's fifth son. He was the first law-man in Iceland ; he dwelt at Hofi after his father, and was the most renowned of Hæing's sons.



CHAPTER XXIV.

Kveldulf's grief.

KVELDULF heard of his son Thorolf's death, and so deeply grieved was he at the tidings that he took to his bed from sorrow and age. Skallagrim came often to him, and talked with him ; he bade him cheer up. ' Anything ' (he said) ' was more fitting than to become worthless and lie bedridden ; better counsel is it that we seek to avenge Thorolf. Maybe we shall come across some of those who took part in his slaying ; but if not that, yet there will be men whom we can reach, and thereby displease the king.'

Kveldulf sang a stave :

' Thorolf in northern isle
(O cruel Norns !) is dead :
Too soon the Thunder-god
Hath ta'en my warrior son.
Thor's heavy wrestler, age,
Holds my weak limbs from fray :
Though keen my spirit spurs,
No speedy vengeance mine.'

King Harold went that summer to Upland, and in the autumn westwards to Valres, and as far as Vors. Aulvir Hnuf was with the king, and often spoke with him about whether he would pay atonement for Thorolf, granting to Kveldulf and Skallagrim money compensation, or such honour as would content them. The king did not altogether refuse this, if father and son would come to him. Whereupon Aulvir started northwards for the Firths, nor stayed his journey till he came one evening to these twain. They received him gratefully, and he remained there for some time. Kveldulf questioned Aulvir closely about the doings at Sandness when Thorolf fell, what doughty deeds Thorolf had wrought before he fell, who smote him with weapon, where he received most wounds, what was the manner of his fall. Aulvir told him all that he asked ; and that king Harold gave him the wound that was alone enough for his bane, and that Thorolf fell forward at the very feet of the king.

Then answered Kveldulf: 'Good is that thou tellest; for 'tis an old saw that he will be avenged who falls forward, and that vengeance will reach him who stands before him when he falls; yet is it unlikely that such good-fortune will be ours.'

Aulvir told father and son that he hoped, if they would go to the king and crave atonement, that it would be a journey to their honour; and he bade them venture this, adding many words to that end.

Kveldulf said he was too old to travel: 'I shall sit at home,' said he.

'Wilt thou go, Grim?' said Aulvir.

'I think I have no errand thither,' said Grim; 'I shall seem to the king not fluent in speech; nor do I think I shall long pray for atonement.'

Aulvir said that he would not need to do so: 'We will do all the speaking for thee as well as we can.'

And seeing that Aulvir pressed this matter strongly, Grim promised to go when he thought he could be ready. He and Aulvir set them a time when Grim should come to the king. Then Aulvir went away first, and returned to the king.



CHAPTER XXV.

Skallagrim's journey to the king.

SKALLAGRIM made him ready for this journey, choosing out of his household and neighbours the strongest and doughtiest that were to be found. One was Ani, a wealthy landowner, another Grani, a third Grimolf and his brother Grim, house-carles these of Skallagrim, and the two brothers Thorbjorn Krum and Thord Beigaldi. These were called Thororna's sons; she dwelt hard by Skallagrim, and was of magic skill. Beigaldi was a coal-biter. There was a man named Thorir Giant, and his brother Thorgeir Earthlong, Odd Lonedweller, and Griss Freedman. Twelve there were for the journey, all stalwart men, and several of them shape-strong.

They took a rowing-ship of Skallagrim's, went southwards

along the coast, stood in to Ostra Firth, then travelled by land up to Vors to the lake there ; and, their course lying so that they must cross it, they got a suitable rowing-ship and ferried them over, whence they had not very far to go to the farm where the king was being entertained.

They came there at the time when the king was gone to table. Some men they found to speak with outside in the yard, and asked what was going on. This being told them, Grim begged one to call Aulvir Hnuf to speak with him. The man went into the room and up to where Aulvir sat, and said : 'There be men here outside newly come, twelve together, if men one may call them, for they are liker to giants in stature and semblance than to mortal men.'

Aulvir at once rose and went out, for he knew who they were who had come. He greeted well his kinsman Grim, and bade him go with him into the room.

Grim said to his comrades : 'Tis the custom here that men go weaponless before the king ; six of us shall go in, the other six shall bide without and keep our weapons.'

Then they entered, and Aulvir went up to the king, Skallagrim standing at his back. Aulvir was spokesman : 'Here now is come Grim Kveldulf's son ; we shall feel thankful to thee, O king, if thou make his journey hither a good one, as we hope it will be. Many get great honour from thee to whom less is due, and who are not nearly so accomplished as is he in every kind of skill. Thou wilt also do this because it is a matter of moment to me, if that is of any worth in thy opinion.'

Aulvir spoke fully and fluently, for he was a man ready of words. And many other friends of Aulvir went before the king and pleaded this cause.

The king looked round, and saw that a man stood at Aulvir's back taller than the others by a head, and bald.

'Is that Skallagrim,' asked the king, 'that tall man ?'

Grim said he guessed rightly.

'I will then,' said the king, 'if thou cravest atonement for Thorolf, that thou become my liege-man, and enter my guard here and serve me. Maybe I shall so like thy service that I shall grant thee atonement for thy brother, or other honour not less than I granted him ; but thou must know

how to keep it better than he did, if I make thee as great a man as was he.'

Skallagrim answered: 'It is well known how far superior to me was Thorolf in every point, and he got no luck by serving thee, O king. Now will I not take that counsel; serve thee I will not, for I know I should get no luck by yielding thee such service as I should wish and as would be worthy. Methinks I should fail herein more than Thorolf.'

The king was silent, and his face became blood-red. Aulvir at once turned away, and bade Grim and his men go out. They did so. They went out, and took their weapons, and Aulvir bade them begone with all haste. He and many with him escorted them to the water-side. Before parting with Skallagrim, Aulvir said:

'Kinsman, thy journey to the king ended otherwise than I would have chosen. I urged much thy coming hither; now, I entreat thee, go home with all speed, and come not in the way of king Harold, unless there be better agreement between you than now seems likely, and keep thee well from the king and from his men.'

Then Grim and his company went over the water; but Aulvir with his men, going to the ships drawn up by the water-side, so hacked them about that none was fit to launch. For they saw men coming down from the king's house, a large body well armed and advancing furiously. These men king Harold had sent after them to slay Grim. The king had found words soon after Grim went out, and said:

'This I see in that tall baldhead: that he is brim full of wolfishness, and he will, if he can reach them, work scathe on men whom we should be loth to lose. Ye may be sure, ye against whom he may bear a grudge, that he will spare none, if he get a chance. Wherefore go after him and slay him.'

Upon this they went and came to the water, and found no ship there fit to launch. So they went back and told the king of their journey, and that Grim and his comrades would now have got clear over the lake.

Skallagrim went his way with his comrades till he reached home; he then told Kveldulf of this journey. Kveldulf showed him well pleased that Skallagrim had not gone to the king on this errand to take service under him; he still

said, as before, that from the king they would get only loss and no amends. Kveldulf and Skallagrim spoke often of their plans, and on this they were agreed, that they would not be able to remain in the land any more than other men who were at enmity with the king, but their counsel must be to go abroad. And it seemed to them desirable to seek Iceland, for good reports were given about choice of land there. Already friends and acquaintances of theirs had gone thither—to wit, Ingolf Arnarson, and his companions—and had taken to them land and homestead in Iceland. Men might take land there free of cost, and choose their homestead at will.

So they quite settled to break up their household and go abroad.

Thorir Hroaldson had in his childhood been fostered with Kveldulf, and he and Skallagrim were about of an age, and as foster-brothers were dear friends. Thorir had become a baron of the king's at the time when the events just told happened, but the friendship between him and Skallagrim continued.

Early in the spring Kveldulf and his company made ready their ships. They had plenty of good craft to choose from ; they made ready two large ships of burden, and took in each thirty able-bodied men, besides women and children. All the movable goods that they could carry they took with them, but their lands none dared buy, for fear of the king's power. And when they were ready, they sailed away : first to the islands called Solundir, which are many and large, and so scored with bays that few men (it is said) know all their havens.



CHAPTER XXVI.

Of Guttorm.

THERE was a man named Guttorm, son of Sigurd Hart. He was mother's brother to king Harold ; also he had been his foster-father, and ruler over his forces, for the king was a child when he first came to the throne. Guttorm had commanded the army in all the battles which Harold had

fought to bring the land under his sway. But when Harold became sole king of all Norway, and sat in peace, then he gave to his kinsman Guttorm Westfold and East-Agdir, and Hringariki, and all the land that had belonged to Halfdan Swarthy his father. Guttorm had two sons and two daughters. His sons were named Sigurd and Ragnar; his daughters Ragnhildr and Aslaug.

Guttorm fell sick, and when near his end sent to king Harold, bidding him see to his children and his province. Soon after this he died. On hearing of his death, the king summoned Hallvard Hardfarer and his brother, and told them to go on a message for him eastwards to Vik, he being then at Throndheim. They made great preparations for their journey, choosing them men and the best ship they could get; it was the very ship they had taken from Thorgils Yeller. But when they were ready, the king told them their errand: they were to go eastwards to Tunsberg, the market town where Guttorm had resided. 'Ye shall,' said the king, 'bring to me Guttorm's sons, but his daughters shall be fostered there till I bestow them in marriage. I will find men to take charge of the province and foster the maidens.'

So the brothers started with a fair wind, and came in the spring eastwards to Vik and to Tunsberg, and there declared their errand. They took the sons of Guttorm, and much movable property, and went their way back. The wind was then somewhat slack, and their voyage slower, but nothing happened till they sailed northwards over the Sogn-sea, having now a good wind and bright weather, and being in merry mood.



CHAPTER XXVII.

Slaying of Hallvard and Sigtrygg.

ALL through the summer Kveldulf and Skallagrim kept a look-out shorewards on the highway of vessels. Skallagrim was very sharp-sighted. He saw Hallvard's company sailing by, and he knew the ship, for he had seen it before when Thorgils went with it. Skallagrim watched their course, and where they lay to in haven at eventide. Then he went back to his own people, and told Kveldulf what he

had seen, and withal how he had recognised the ship, being that which once was Thorolf's, and was taken by Hallvard from Thorgils, and doubtless there were some men on board who would be worth catching.

So they made them ready with both their boats, and twenty men in each. Kveldulf steered one, Skallagrim the other. Then they rowed and made for the ship. But when they came where it lay, they put in to land.

Hallvard's men had set up the tent over their ship, and laid them down to sleep. But when Kveldulf's force came upon them, then the watchmen who sat at the gangway-end leapt up, and called out to the ship; they bade the men rise, for an enemy was upon them. Hallvard's party leapt to their weapons. But when Kveldulf with his men came to the gangway-end, he went out by the stern gangway, while Skallagrim went forward to the other gangway.

Kveldulf had in his hand a battle-axe; but when he got on board, he bade his men go along the outer way by the gunwale and cut the tent from its forks, while he himself rushed aft to the stern-castle. And it is said that he then had a fit of shape-strength, as had also several of his comrades. They slew all that came in their way, the same did Skallagrim where he boarded the ship; nor did father and son stay hands till the ship was cleared. When Kveldulf came aft to the stern-castle, he brandished high his battle-axe, and smote Hallvard right through helm and head, so that the axe sank in even to the shaft; then he snatched it back towards him so forcibly that he whirled Hallvard aloft, and slung him overboard. Skallagrim cleared the forecastle, slaying Sigtrygg. Many men plunged into the sea; but Skallagrim's men took one of the boats, and rowed after and slew all that were swimming.

There were lost with Hallvard fifty men in all. The ship and the wealth that was in it Skallagrim's men took. Two or three men whom they deemed of least note they seized, and gave them their lives, asking of them who had been in the ship, and what had been the purport of the voyage. After learning all the truth about this, they looked over the slain who lay on ship-board. It was found that more had leapt overboard, and so perished, than had fallen on the ship. The sons of Guttorm had leapt overboard and perished.

Of these, one was twelve years old, the other ten, and both were lads of promise.

Then Skallagrim set free the men whose lives he had spared, and bade them go to king Harold and tell him the whole tale of what had been done there, and who had been the doers of it. ‘Ye shall also,’ said he, ‘bear to the king this ditty :

‘For a noble warrior slain
Vengeance now on king is ta’en :
Wolf and eagle tread as prey
Princes born to sovereign sway.
Hallvard’s body cloven through
Headlong in the billows flew ;
Wounds of wight once swift to fare
Swooping vulture’s beak doth tear.’

After this Skallagrim and his men took out to their ships the captured ship and her cargo. And then they made an exchange, loading the ship they had taken, but emptying one of their own which was smaller ; and in this they put stones, and bored holes and sank it. Then, as soon as ever the wind was fair, they sailed out to sea.

It is said of shape-strong men, or men with a fit of Berserk fury on them, that while the fit lasted they were so strong that nought could withstand them ; but when it passed off, then they were weaker than their wont. Even so it was with Kveldulf. When the shape-strong fit went from him, then he felt exhaustion from the onset he had made, and became so utterly weak that he lay in bed.

And now a fair wind took them out to sea. Kveldulf commanded the ship which they had taken from Hallvard. With the fair wind the ships kept well together, and for long time were in sight of each other.

But when they were now far advanced over the main, Kveldulf’s sickness grew worse. And when it came to this, that death was near, then he called to him his shipmates, and told them that he thought it likely they and he would soon take different ways. ‘I have never,’ he said, ‘been an ailing man ; but if it so be (as now seems likely) that I die, then make me a coffin, and put me overboard : and it will go far otherwise than I think if I do not come to Iceland and take land there. Ye shall bear my greeting to my son Grim, when ye meet, and tell him withal that if he

come to Iceland, and things so turn out that—unlikely as it may seem—I be there first, then he shall choose him a homestead as near as may be to where I have come ashore.'

Shortly after this Kveldulf died.

His shipmates did as he had bidden them do ; they laid him in a coffin, and shot it overboard. There was a man named Grin, son of Thorir Kettlesson Keel-fare, of noble kin and wealthy. He was in Kveldulf's ship ; he had been an old friend of both father and son, and a companion both of them and of Thorolf, for which reason he had incurred the king's anger. He now took command of the ship after Kveldulf was dead.

But when they were come to Iceland, approaching the land from the south, they sailed westwards along the coast, because they had heard that Ingolf had settled there. But coming over against Reykja-ness, and seeing the firth open before them, they steered both ships into the firth.

And now the wind came on to blow hard, with much rain and mist. Thus the ships were parted.

Grim the Halogalander and his crew sailed in up the Borgar Firth past all the skerries ; then they cast anchor till the wind fell and the weather cleared. They waited for the flood-tide, and then took their ship up into a river-mouth ; it is called Gufu-river. They drew the ship up this river as far as it could go ; then unshipped the cargo, and remained there for the first winter. They explored the land along the sea both inwards and outwards, and they had not gone far before they found Kveldulf's coffin cast up in a creek. They carried the coffin to the ness hard by, set it down there, and raised thereover a pile of stones.



CHAPTER XXVIII.

Of Skallagrim's land-taking.

SKALLAGRIM came to land where a large ness ran out into the sea, and above the ness was a narrow isthmus ; and there they put out their lading. That ness they called Ship-ness. Then Skallagrim spied out the

land: there was much moorland and wide woods, and a broad space between fells and firths, seal-hunting in plenty, and good fishing. But as they spied out the land southwards along the sea, they found before them a large firth; and, turning inwards along this firth, they stayed not their going till they found their companions, Grim the Haloglander and the rest. A joyful meeting was there. They told Skallagrim of his father's death, and how Kveldulf had come to land there, and they had buried him. Then they led Skallagrim to the place, and it seemed to him that thereabouts would be a good spot to build a homestead. He then went away, and back to his shipmates; and for that winter each party remained where they had come to land. Then Skallagrim took land between fells and firths, all the moors out to Seal-loch, and the upper land to Borgarhraun, and southwards to Hafnar-fell, and all that land from the watershed to the sea. Next spring he moved his ship southwards to the firth, and into the creek close to where Kveldulf came to land; and there he set his home-stead, and called it Borg, and the firth Borgar-firth, and so too the country-side further up they named after the firth.

To Grim the Haloglander he gave dwelling-place south of Borgar-firth, on the shore named Hvann-eyrr. A little beyond this a bay of no great size cuts into the land. There they found many ducks, wherefore they called it Duck-kyle, and the river that fell into the sea there Duck-kyle-river. From this river to the river called Grims-river, the land stretching upwards between them Grim had. That same spring, as Skallagrim had his cattle driven inwards along the sea, they came to a small ness where they caught some swans, so they called it Swan-ness. Skallagrim gave land to his shipmates. The land between Long-river and Hafss-brook he gave to Ani, who dwelt at Anabrekka. His son was Aunund Sjoni. About this was the controversy of Thorstein and Tongue Odd.

Grani dwelt at Granastead on Digraness. To Thorbjorn Krum he gave the land by Gufu-river upward, and to Thord of Beigaldi. Krum dwelt at Krums-hills, but Thord at Beigaldi. To Thorir Giant and his brothers he gave land upwards from Einkunnir and the outer part by Long-river. Thorir Giant dwelt at Giantstead. His

daughter was Thordis Staung, who afterwards dwelt at Stangerholt. Thorgeir dwelt at Earthlongstead.

Skallagrim spied out the land upwards all round the country-side. First he went inwards along the Borgar-firth to its head; then followed the west bank of the river, which he called White-river, because he and his companions had never before seen waters that fell out of glaciers, and the colour of the river seemed to them wonderful.

They went up along White-river till a river was before them coming down from the fells to the north; this they called North-river. And they followed it up till yet again before them was a river bringing down but little water. This river they crossed, and still went up along North-river; then they soon saw where the little river fell out of a cleft, and they called it Cleave-river. Then they crossed North-river, and went back to White-river, and followed that upwards. Soon again a river crossed their way, and fell into White-river; this they called Cross-river. They learnt that every river was full of fish. After this they returned to Borg.



CHAPTER XXIX.

Of Skallagrim's industry.

SKALLAGRIM was most industrious. He had about him always many men, whom he set to seek diligently all such provisions as could be got there for man's sustenance, because at first they had but little live-stock compared with the needs of their numerous company. But what live-stock they had went every winter self-feeding in the woods.

Skallagrim was a good shipwright, and westwards of Myrar was no lack of driftwood. He had buildings set up on Swan-ness, and had another house there. This he made a starting-point for sea-fishing, seal-hunting, and egg-gathering; in all these kinds there was plenty of provisions to get, as well as driftwood to bring to him. Whales also often came in there, and whoso would might shoot them. All such creatures were then tame on the hunting-ground,

as they were unused to man. His third house he had on the sea in Western Myrar. This was even a better place to look out for driftwood. There, too, he had land sown, and called it Acres. Over against it lay islands, among which whales were found ; these they called Whale-islands.

Skallagrim also sent his men up on the salmon-rivers to fish. He set Odd Lonehouse by Cleave-river to see to the salmon-fishing there. Odd dwelt under Lonehouse. Lonehouse-ness has its name from him. Sigmund was the name of the man whom Skallagrim set by North-river ; he dwelt at what was then called Sigmundstead, but now Hauga. Sigmundar-ness takes its name from him. He afterwards moved his homestead to Munodar-ness, that being thought more convenient for salmon-fishing.

But as Skallagrim's live-stock multiplied, the cattle used to go up to the fells in the summer. And he found that the cattle that went on the heath were by far better and fatter ; also that sheep did well through the winters in the fell-dales without being driven down. So Skallagrim set up buildings close to the fell, and had a house there ; and there he had his sheep kept. Of this farm Griss was the overseer, and after him was called Grisartongue. Thus Skallagrim's wealth had many legs to stand on.

Some time after Skallagrim's coming out, a ship put into Borgar-firth from the main, commanded by a man named Oleif Halt. With him were his wife and children and other of his kin, and the aim of his voyage was to get him a home in Iceland. Oleif was a man wealthy, high-born, and foreseeing. Skallagrim asked Oleif and all his company to his house for lodging. Oleif accepted this, and was with Skallagrim for his first winter in Iceland.

But in the following spring Skallagrim showed him to choice land south of White-river upwards from Grims-river to Flokadale-river. Oleif accepted this, and moved thither his household, and set there his homestead by Warm-brook as it is called. He was a man of renown ; his sons were Ragi in Hot-spring-dale, and Thorarin, Ragi's brother, who took the law-speakership next after Hrafn Hængsson. Thorarin dwelt at Warm-brook ; he had to wife Thordis, daughter of Olaf Shy, sister of Thord Yeller.

CHAPTER XXX.

Of the coming out of Yngvar, and of Skallagrim's iron-forging.

ING HAROLD FAIR-HAIR took for his own all those lands that Kveldulf and Skallagrim had left behind them in Norway, and all their other property that he could lay hands on. He also sought diligently after those men who had been in the counsels or confidence or in any way helpers of Skallagrim and his folk in the deeds which they wrought before Skallagrim went abroad out of the land. And so far stretched the enmity of the king against father and son, that he bore hatred against their kith and kin, or any whom he knew to have been their dear friends. Some suffered punishment from him, many fled away and sought refuge, some within the land, some out of the land altogether. Yngvar Skallagrim's wife's father was one of these men aforesaid. This rede did he take, that he turned all his wealth that he could into movables, then gat him a sea-going ship and a crew thereto, and made ready to go to Iceland, for he had heard that Skallagrim had taken up his abode there, and there would be no lack of choice land there with Skallagrim. So when they were ready and a fair wind blew, he sailed out to sea, and his voyage sped well. He came to Iceland on the south coast, and held on westwards past Reykja-ness, and sailed into Borgarfirth, and entering Long-river went up it even to the Falls. There they put out the ship's lading.

But when Skallagrim heard of Yngvar's coming, he at once went to meet him and bade him to his house with as many men as he would. Yngvar accepted this offer. The ship was drawn up, and Yngvar went to Borg with many men, and stayed that winter with Skallagrim. In the spring Skallagrim offered him choice land. He gave Yngvar the farm which he had on Swan-ness, and land inwards to Mud-brook and outwards to Strome-firth. Thereupon Yngvar went out to this farm and took possession, and he was a most able man and a wealthy. Skallagrim then built a house on Ship-ness, and this he kept for a long time thereafter.

Skallagrim was a good iron-smith, and in winter wrought much in red iron ore. He had a smithy set up some way out from Borg, close by the sea, at a place now called Raufar-ness. The woods he thought were not too far from thence. But since he could find no stone there so hard or smooth as he thought good for hammering iron on (for there are no beach pebbles, the seashore being all fine sand), one evening, when others were gone to sleep, Skallagrim went to the sea, and pushed out an eight-oared boat he had, and rowed out to the Midfirth islands. There he dropped an anchor from the bows of the boat, then stepped overboard, and dived down to the bottom, and brought up a large stone, and lifted it into the boat. Then he himself climbed into the boat and rowed to land, and carried the stone to the smithy and laid it down before the smithy door, and thenceforth he hammered iron on it. That stone lies there yet, and much slag beside it; and the marks of the hammering may be seen on its upper face, and it is a surf-worn boulder, unlike the other stones that are there. Four men nowadays could not lift a larger mass. Skallagrim worked hard at smithying, but his house-carles grumbled thereat, and thought it over early rising. Then Skallagrim composed this stave:

‘Who wins wealth by iron
Right early must rise :
Of the sea’s breezy brother
Wind-holders need blast.
On furnace-gold glowing
My stout hammer rings,
While heat-feeding bellows
A whistling storm stir.’



CHAPTER XXXI.

Of Skallagrim’s children.

SKALLAGRIM and Bera had a great many children, but at first they all died. Then they had a son, who was sprinkled with water and named Thorolf. As a child he soon grew to be tall and was fair of countenance.

It was the talk of all that he would be just such another as Thorolf Kveldulf's son, after whom he was named. Thorolf was far beyond children of his own age in strength. And as he grew to manhood he became doughty in most accomplishments then in vogue among those who were well trained. Thorolf was of a right cheery mood. Early did he come to such full strength as to be deemed fit for warlike service with other men. He was soon a favourite with all, and his father and mother loved him well. Skallagrim and his wife had two daughters; one was named Sæunn, the other Thorunn. They also were of great promise as they grew up. Then Skallagrim and his wife had yet another son. He was sprinkled with water and named, and his name was Egil. But as he grew up it was soon seen that he would be ill-favoured, like his father, with black hair. When but three years old he was as tall and strong as other boys of six or seven. He was soon talkative and word-wise. Somewhat ill to manage was he when at play with other lads.

That spring Yngvar went to Borg, his errand being to bid Skallagrim to a feast at his house, he also named for the party his daughter Bera and Thorolf her son, and any others that Skallagrim liked to bring. Skallagrim promised to come. Yngvar then went home, prepared for the banquet, and had ale brewed. But when the set time came that Skallagrim and Bera should go to the feast, Thorolf made him ready to go with them, as also some house-carles, so that they were fifteen in all. Egil told his father that he wished to go.

'I am,' said he, 'as much akin to Yngvar as is Thorolf.'

'You shall not go,' said Skallagrim, 'for you know not how to behave yourself in company where there is much drinking, you who are not good to deal with though you be sober.'

Then Skallagrim mounted his horse and rode away, but Egil was ill content with his lot.

He went out of the yard, and found a draught horse of Skallagrim's, got on its back and rode after Skallagrim's party. No easy way had he over the moor, for he did not know the road; but he kept his eyes on the riders before him when copse or wood were not in the way. And this is to tell of his journey, that late in the evening he came to

Swan-ness, when men sat there a-drinking. He went into the room, but when Yngvar saw Egil he received him joyfully, and asked why he had come so late. Egil told of his words with Skallagrim. Yngvar made Egil sit by him, they two sat opposite Skallagrim and Thorolf. For merriment over their ale they fell to reciting staves. Then Egil recited a stave :

‘Hasting I came to the hearth fire
Of Yngvar, right fain so to find him,
Him who on heroes bestoweth
Gold that the heather-worm guardeth.
Thou, of the snake’s shining treasure
Alway a generous giver,
Wilt not than me of three winters
Doughtier song-smith discover.’

Yngvar praised this stave, and thanked Egil much therefor, but on the morrow he brought to Egil as reward for the poem three sea-snail shells and a duck’s egg. And next day at the drinking Egil recited another stave about his poem’s reward :

‘The wielder of keen-biting wound-fowl
Gave unto Egil the talker
Three silent dogs of the surf-swell,
Meet for the praise in his poem.
He, the skilled guide of the sea-horse,
Knowing to please with a present,
Gave as fourth gift to young Egil
Round egg, the brook-bird’s bed-bolster.’

Egil’s poetry won him thanks from many men. No more tidings were there of that journey. Egil went home with Skallagrim.



CHAPTER XXXII.

Of lord Brynjolf and Bjorn, his son.

THERE was in Sogn a lord named Bjorn, a rich man ; he dwelt at Aurland. His son was Brynjolf, who was sole heir to all his father’s wealth. Brynjolf’s sons were Bjorn and Thord. They were young when what has been just told happened. Bjorn was a great traveller, sometimes on free-booting, sometimes on trading voyages.

He was a right doughty man. It so chanced that one summer Bjorn was present at a banquet attended by many. He saw there a fair maiden who pleased him well. He asked of what family she was, and was told that she was sister of lord Thorir Hroaldsson, and was named Thora, with the by-name Lacehand. Bjorn made his suit and asked Thora to wife. But Thorir refused his offer, and with this they parted. But that same autumn Bjorn took men and went with a cutter well equipt northwards to the Firths, and came to Thorir's when he was not at home. Bjorn took Thora away thence, and home with him to Aurland. They two were there for the winter, and Bjorn would fain hold a wedding with her. Brynjolf his father ill liked what Bjorn had done ; he thought there was dishonour therein, whereas there had been ere this long friendship between Thorir and Brynjolf.

'So far,' said he, 'Bjorn, from your holding a wedding with Thora here in my house without the leave of her brother, she shall be here as well respected as if she were my daughter and your sister.' And all had to be as Brynjolf ordered in his household, whether Bjorn liked it well or ill. Brynjolf sent men to Thorir to offer him atonement and redress for what Bjorn had done. Thorir bade Brynjolf send Thora home ; no atonement could there be else. But Bjorn would in no wise let her go away, though Brynjolf begged it. And so the winter wore on.

But when spring came, then Brynjolf and Bjorn were talking one day of their matters. Brynjolf asked what Bjorn meant to do. Bjorn said 'twas likeliest that he should go away out of the land.

'Most to my mind is it,' said he, 'that you should give me a long-ship and crew therewith, and I go a free-booting.'

'No hope is there of this,' said Bjorn, 'that I shall put in your hands a warship and strong force, for I know not but you will go about just what is against my wish ; why even now already I have enough trouble from you. A merchant-ship I will give you, and wares withal : go you then southwards to Dublin. That voyage is now most highly spoken of. I will get you a good crew.'

Bjorn said he would take this as his father willed. So he had a good merchant-ship made ready, and got men for it. Bjorn now made him ready for this voyage, but was some time about it. But when he was quite ready and a fair wind blew, he embarked in a boat with twelve men and rowed in to Aurland, and they went up to the homestead and to his mother's bower. She was sitting therein with many women. Thora was there. Bjorn said Thora must go with him, and they led her away. But his mother bade the women not dare to let them know this within in the hall: Brynjolf, she said, would be in a sad way if he knew it, and this would bring about great mischief between father and son. But Thora's clothes and trinkets were all laid there ready to hand, and Bjorn and his men took all with them.

Then they went that night out to their ship, at once hoisted their sail, and sailed out by the Sogn-sea, and so to the main. They had an ill wind, before which they must needs run, and were long tossed about on the main, because they were bent on shunning Norway at all hazards. And so it was that one day they were sailing off the east coast of Shetland during a gale, and brake their ship in making land at Moss-ey. They got out the cargo, and went into the town that was there, carrying thither all their wares, and they drew up their ship and repaired damages.



CHAPTER XXXIII.

Bjorn goes to Iceland.

ALITTLE before winter came a ship from the south out of the Orkneys, with the tidings that a long-ship had come in autumn to those islands. Therein were messengers of king Harold, with this errand to earl Sigurd, that the king would have Bjorn Brynjolfsson slain wherever he might be found, and the same message Harold sent to the Southern Isles and even to Dublin. Bjorn heard these tidings, and withal that he was outlawed in Norway. Forthwith on reaching Shetland Bjorn had held his wedding with Thora, and through the winter they stayed at Moss-ey-town.

But in spring, as soon as ever the sea began to calm, Bjorn drew forth his ship, and made him ready with all speed. And when he was ready and got a wind, he sailed out to the main. They had a strong breeze, and were but little time out ere they came to the south coast of Iceland. The wind was blowing on the land ; then it bore them westwards along the coast, and so out to sea. But when they got a shift of wind back again, then they sailed for the land. There was not a single man on board who had been in Iceland before. They sailed into a wondrous large firth, the wind bearing them towards its western shore. Landwards nothing was seen but breakers and harbourless shore. Then they stood slant-wise across the wind as they might (but still eastwards), till a firth lay over against them, into which they sailed, till all the skerries and the surf were passed. Then they put in by a ness. An island lay out opposite this, and a deep sound was between them : there they made fast the ship. A bay ran up west of the ness, and above this bay stood a good-sized rocky hill.

Bjorn and some men with him got into a boat, Bjorn telling his comrades to beware of saying about their voyage aught that might work them trouble. They rowed to the buildings, and found there men to speak to. First they asked where they had come to land. The men told them that this was named Borgar-firth ; that the buildings they saw were called Borg ; that the goodman was Skallagrim.

Bjorn at once remembered about him, and he went to meet Skallagrim, and they talked together. Skallagrim asked who they were. Bjorn named himself and his father, but Skallagrim knew Brynjolf well, so he offered to Bjorn such help as he needed. This Bjorn accepted thankfully. Then Skallagrim asked what others there were in the ship, persons of rank. Bjorn said there was Thora, Hroald's daughter, sister of lord Thorir. Skallagrim was right glad for that, and said that it was his bounden duty to give to the sister of Thorir his own foster-brother such help as she needed or he could supply ; and he bade her and Bjorn both to his house with all his shipmates. Bjorn accepted this. So the cargo was moved from the ship up to the homestead at Borg. There they set up their booths ; but the ship was drawn up into the brook hard by. And

where Bjorn's party had their booths is still called Bjorn's home-field. Bjorn and his shipmates all took up their abode with Skallagrim, who never had about him fewer than sixty stout fellows.



CHAPTER XXXIV.

Of Skallagrim and Bjorn.

IT befell in autumn, when ships had come to Iceland from Norway, that this report came over, how Bjorn had run away with Thora without the consent of her kin, and for that the king had made him an outlaw from Norway. But when Skallagrim got to know this, he called Bjorn to him, and asked how it had been with his marriage; had it been made with the consent of his wife's kin.

'I never looked for this,' said he, 'in a son of Brynjolf, that I should not know the truth from him.'

Bjorn answered, 'Truth only told I to you, Grim, and you may not rebuke me for this, though I told you no further than you asked. But now I must own this, which is true, that you have heard truth about this match not being made with the agreement of Thorir, my wife's brother.'

Then spake Skallagrim in great wrath, 'How dared you come to meet me? Did you not know what friendship was between me and Thorir?'

Bjorn answered, 'I knew that between you two was foster-brotherhood and close friendship; but I sought your home because I was driven ashore here, and I knew it would avail naught to shun you. Now will it be for you to rule what my lot shall be, but I hope for good from you as I am of your household.'

Then came forward Thorolf Skallagrim's son, and added many a word, and begged his father not to lay this to Bjorn's charge after once receiving him. Several others spoke to the same end. And so it came that Skallagrim was appeased, and said that Thorolf should have his way here.

'Take you Bjorn,' said he, 'and deal with him as may best prove your manhood.'

CHAPTER XXXV.

Thorolf goes abroad.

THORA bare a child in the summer; it was a girl. She was sprinkled with water, and named Asgerdr. Bera got a woman to look after the girl. Bjorn stayed for the winter with Skallagrim as did all his shipmates. Thorolf struck up a friendship with Bjorn, and was ever in his company. But when spring came, one day Thorolf had a talk with his father, and asked him what counsel he would give about Bjorn his winter guest, or what help he would lend him. Grim asked Thorolf what Bjorn had in view.

‘I think,’ said Thorolf, ‘that Bjorn would soonest go to Norway, if he could be there in peace. Methinks, father, this plan lies before us, that you send men to Norway to offer atonement for Bjorn; Thorir will greatly honour your word.’

Thorolf by his persuasion so managed that Skallagrim yielded and gave men for the outward voyage that summer. These went with message and tokens to Thorir Hroaldsson, and sought atonement between him and Bjorn. But no sooner did Brynjolf hear this than he, too, set his whole mind to offer atonement for Bjorn. And the end of this matter was that Thorir took atonement for Bjorn, because he saw that it had come to this now that Bjorn had nothing to fear. Thus Brynjolf got atonement accepted for Bjorn, and Skallagrim’s messengers abode with Thorir for the winter. In the summer following they went back; and on their coming back in autumn they told their tidings that Bjorn was admitted to atonement in Norway. Bjorn was with Skallagrim for yet a third winter. But next spring he made him ready for departure with his following. And when Bjorn was ready for going, then Bera said she would fain have Asgerdr, her foster-child, left behind. This Bjorn accepted, and the girl was left behind and brought up with Skallagrim’s family. Thorolf, Skallagrim’s son, settled to go with Bjorn, and Skallagrim gave him means for the journey. So he went abroad in the summer with Bjorn. Their

voyage sped well, and they came off the main into Sogn-sea. Bjorn then sailed into Sogn, and thence on home to his father, and Thorolf with him. Brynjolf received them joyfully. Then word was sent to Thorir Hroaldsson. He and Brynjolf set a time for a meeting; to this meeting Bjorn also came. He and Thorir there ratified their atonement. Then Thorir paid out of hand such property in his house as belonged to Thora; and thereafter Thorir and Bjorn were good brothers-in-law and friends. Bjorn then stayed at home at Aurland with Brynjolf, Thorolf also being there in much favour both with father and son.



CHAPTER XXXVI.

Of Eric Bloodaxe and Thorolf.

KING HAROLD long held his residence in Hordaland or Rogaland, at those large estates that he owned, at Outstone or Augvalds-ness, or at Afrekked in Fitjar, or at Seaham in Lygra. But this winter the king was in the north part of the land.

Now, when Bjorn and Thorolf had been one winter in Norway and spring came, they made ready a ship and gathered men. And in the summer they went a-freebooting eastwards, and came home in the autumn, having won much wealth. But when they came home they heard that king Harold was in Rogaland and would remain there for the winter. King Harold was beginning to age much and fail in strength, but many of his sons were come to vigour. His son Eric, by-named Bloodaxe, was then quite young. He was being fostered with lord Thorir Hroaldsson. The king loved Eric above all his sons. Thorir was on most intimate terms with the king then.

Bjorn and Thorolf, when they came home, went first to Aurland, but afterwards turned their way northwards to visit lord Thorir at his home. They had a certain galley rowed by thirteen or fourteen oarsmen on either side, and they had about thirty men with them. This ship they had taken in their summer freebooting. It was gaily painted

above the sea-line, and was very beautiful. But when they came to Thorir they were made welcome, and abode there some time ; while the ship, tented over, floated opposite the house. It happened one day that, as Thorolf and Bjorn were going down to the ship, they saw that Eric, the king's son, was there ; he went now out on to the ship, now up to the land, and stood there looking at the ship. Then said Bjorn to Thorolf :

'The king's son admires the ship much ; do you offer it to him as a present, for I know it will much help us with the king if Eric be our pleader with him. I have heard it said that the king bears a heavy grudge against you for your father's sake.'

Thorolf said that this would be a good plan.

They then went down to the ship, and Thorolf spoke :

'Thou regardest the ship carefully, prince ; how dost thou like it ?'

'Right well,' said he, 'it is a perfect beauty.'

'Then will I give it thee,' said Thorolf, 'if thou wilt take the present.'

'Take it I will,' said Eric, 'and thou wilt deem it but poor payment therefor though I should offer thee my friendship ; but this thou mayest look for if I live.'

Thorolf said that he thought the ship were thus far overpaid.

Then they separated. But thenceforward the king's son was right cheerful with Thorolf and his friend.

Bjorn and Thorolf, talking with Thorir, asked him whether he thought it true that the king bore a heavy grudge against Thorolf.

Thorir did not deny that he had heard so.

'Then I would fain,' said Bjorn, 'that you should go and plead Thorolf's cause before him, for one lot shall befall me and Thorolf ; he did as much for me when I was in Iceland.'

The end was that Thorir promised to go to the king, and bade them try whether the king's son would go with him. But when Thorolf and Bjorn spake of this with Eric, he promised his influence with his father.

After that Thorolf and Bjorn went their way to Sogn.

But Thorir and Eric the king's son set in order the newly-given galley, and went south to meet the king, and found him in Hordaland. He received them joyfully. They remained there for awhile, watching for a fit time to approach the king when he should be in a good humour. Then they opened this matter before the king, and said that a certain man had come named Thorolf, Skallagrim's son. 'We would pray thee,' they said, 'O king, to bear in mind this: that his kinsmen have done good to thee, and not to make him pay for what his father did in avenging his brother.'

Thorir spoke herein soft words, but the king answered rather shortly that to him and his much mischance had come from Kveldulf and his sons, and 'twas to be looked for that this Thorolf would be like-minded with his kin. 'They are all,' said he, 'overbearing men, who know no measure, and care not with whom they have to deal.'

Then Eric took the word. He said that Thorolf had made friends with him, and given him a noble present—that ship which they had there. 'I have,' said he, 'promised him my hearty friendship. There will be few to become friends with me if this man get nothing by it. Thou wilt not let it be so, father, with him who has been the first to give me such a treasure.'

The end was that the king promised them before they parted that Thorolf should be in peace with him. 'But I will not,' said he, 'that he come into my presence. And thou, Eric, mayst make him as close to thee as thou wilt, him or more of his kin. But one of two things will happen, either they will be softer to thee than to me, or thou wilt rue this thy intercession, and that thou lettest them be long in thy company.'

Thereafter went Eric Bloodaxe and Thorir home to the Firths; then they sent word to Thorolf how their errand to the king had sped. Thorolf and Bjorn were for that winter with Brynjolf. Many summers they were out a-freebooting, but the winters they spent with Brynjolf, or sometimes with Thorir.



CHAPTER XXXVII.

The journey to Bjarmaland.

ERIC BLOODAXE now took a share in the realm. He held oversight in Hordaland and the Firths ; he took and kept about him a body-guard. And one spring Eric Bloodaxe made ready to go to Bjarmaland, and chose him much people for that voyage. Thorolf betook him to this voyage with Eric, and was in the forecastle of his ship, and bare his standard. Thorolf was then taller and stronger than other men, and herein like his father. In that expedition befell much tidings. Eric had a great battle by the river Dvina in Bjarmaland, wherein he won the victory, as is told in the lays about him. And in that voyage he took Gunnhilda, daughter of Auzur Toti, and brought her home with him. Gunnhilda was above all women beautiful and shrewd, and of magic cunning. There was great intimacy between Thorolf and Gunnhilda. Thorolf ever spent the winters with Eric, the summers in freebooting.

The next tidings were that Thora Bjorn's wife fell sick and died. But some while after Bjorn took to him another wife ; she was named Alof, the daughter of Erling the wealthy of Ostr. They two had a daughter named Gunnhilda.

There was a man named Thorgeir Thornfoot ; he dwelt in Fenhring of Hordaland, at a place called Askr. He had three sons—one named Hadd, another Bergonund, the third Atli the short. Bergonund was beyond other men tall and strong, and he was grasping and ungentle ; Atli the short was of small stature, square-built, of sturdy strength. Thorgeir was a very rich man, a devoted heathen worshipper, of magic cunning. Hadd went out freebooting, and was seldom at home.



CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Thorolf comes out to Iceland.

THOROLF Skallagrim's son made him ready one summer for a trading voyage; he purposed what he also performed, to go to Iceland and see his father. He had now been long abroad. By this he had got great store of wealth and many costly things. When ready for the voyage, he went to king Eric. And at their parting the king delivered to Thorolf an axe, which he said he wished to give to Skallagrim. The axe was snag-horned, large, gold-mounted, the hilt overlaid with silver; it was most valuable and costly.

Thorolf went his way as soon as he was ready, and his voyage sped well; he came with his ship into Borgar-firth, and at once hastened home to his father. A right joyful meeting was theirs. Then Skallagrim went down to Thorolf's ship, and had it drawn up, and Thorolf went home to Borg with twelve men. But when he came home, he gave Skallagrim King Eric's greeting, and delivered to him the axe which the king had sent him. Skallagrim took the axe and held it up, looked at it awhile, but said nothing. He fixed it up by his seat.

It chanced one day in the autumn at Borg that Skallagrim had several oxen driven home which he meant to slaughter. Two of these he had led under the house-wall, and placed with heads crossing. He took a large flat stone, and pushed it under their necks. Then he went near with the axe—the king's gift—and hewed at the oxen both at once, so that he took off the heads of the two. But the axe smote down on the stone, so that the mouth broke, and was rent through all the tempered steel. Skallagrim looked at the edge, said nothing, but went into the fire-hall, and, mounting to the wall-beam, thrust the axe up among the rafters above the door. There it lay in the smoke all the winter.

But in the spring Thorolf declared that he meant to go abroad that summer.

Skallagrim forbade him, saying: “Tis good to drive

home with your wain whole. You have,' said he, 'gotten great honour by travel; but there is the old saw, "Many farings, many fortunes." Take you now here as much share of the property as you think will make you a great man.'

Thorolf said he would make yet one journey more. 'And I have,' he said, 'an urgent errand for the journey. But when I come back next time I shall settle here. But Asgerdr, your foster-child, shall go out with me to her father. This he bade me when I came west.'

Skallagrim said Thorolf would have his way.

Thereafter Thorolf went to his ship, and put it in order. And when all was ready they moved the ship out to Digranness, and it lay there waiting a wind. Then Asgerdr went to the ship with him. But before Thorolf left Borg Skallagrim went and took down from the rafters over the door the axe—the king's gift—and came out with it. The haft was now black with smoke, and the blade rusted. Skallagrim looked at the axe's edge. Then he handed it to Thorolf, reciting this stave :

'The fierce wound-wolf's tooth-edge
Hath flaws not a few,
An axe all deceitful,
A wood cleaver weak.
Begone ! worthless weapon,
With shaft smoke begrimed :
A prince ill-beseemed it
Such present to send.'



CHAPTER XXXIX.

Kettle Blund comes out to Iceland.

THIS had happened while Thorolf was away, that one summer a merchant ship from Norway came into Borgar-firth. Merchant-ships used then commonly to be drawn up into rivers, brook-mouths, or ditches. This ship belonged to a man named Kettle, and by-named Blund ; he was a Norwegian of noble kin and wealthy. His son, named Geir, who was then of full age, was with him in the

ship. Kettle meant to make his home in Iceland ; he came late in the summer. Skallagrim knew all about him, and offered him lodging for himself and all his company. This Kettle took, and was with Skallagrim for the winter. That winter Geir, Kettle's son, asked to wife Thorunn, Skallagrim's daughter, and the match was made, and Geir took her.

Next spring Skallagrim showed Kettle to land above Oleif's land, by White-river, from Flokadale-river mouth to Reykjadale-river mouth, and all the tongue that lay between the rivers up to Redgill, and all Flokadale above the slopes. Kettle dwelt at Thrandarholt ; Geir at Geirs-lithe ; he had another farm in Reykjadale at Upper Reykir. He was called Geir the wealthy ; his sons were Blund-Kettle and Thorgeir-blund. A third was Hrisa-blund, who first dwelt at Hrisa.



CHAPTER XL.

Of Egil's and Skallagrim's games.

SKALLAGRIM took much pleasure in trials of strength and games ; he liked to talk about such. Ball-play was then a common game. Plenty of strong men there were at that time in the neighbourhood, but not one of strength to match with Skallagrim. He was now somewhat stricken in years. There was a man named Thord, son of Grani, at Graninstead, who was of great promise ; he was then young ; very fond he was of Egil, Skallagrim's son. Egil often engaged in wrestling ; he was headstrong and hot-tempered, but all had the sense to teach their sons to give way to Egil. A game of ball was held at White-river-dale in the early winter, to which was a great gathering of people from all the country-side. Thither went many of Skallagrim's household to the game. Chief among them was Thord, Grani's son. Egil asked Thord to let him go with him to the game ; he was then in his seventh winter. Thord let him do so, and Egil mounted behind him. But when they came to the play-meeting, then the men made up sides for the play. Many small boys had come there too, and they made up a game for themselves. For this also sides were chosen.

Egil was matched to play against a boy named Grim, son

of Hegg, of Hegg-stead. Grim was ten or eleven years old, and strong for his age. But when they played together Egil got the worst of it. And Grim made all he could of his advantage. Then Egil got angry and lifted up the bat and struck Grim, whereupon Grim seized him and threw him down with a heavy fall, and handled him rather roughly, and said he would thrash him if he did not behave. But when Egil got to his feet, he went out of the game, and the boys hooted at him.

Egil went to Thord and told him what had been done. Thord said :

‘I will go with you, and we will be avenged on them.’

He gave into his hands a halberd that he had been carrying. Such weapons were then customary. They went where the boys' game was. Grim had now got the ball and was running away with it, and the other boys after him. Then Egil bounded upon Grim, and drove the axe into his head, so that it at once pierced his brain. After this Egil and Thord went away to their own people. The Myramen ran to their weapons, and so did either party. Oleif Halt, with his following, ran to help the Borgarmen, who were thus far the larger number, and they parted without doing more. But hence arose a quarrel between Oleif and Hegg. They fought at Laxfit, by Grims-river ; there seven men fell, but Hegg was wounded to death, and his brother Kvig fell. But when Egil came home, Skallagrim said little about it ; but Bera said Egil had in him the makings of a freebooter, and that 'twould be well, so soon as he were old enough, to give him a long-ship. Then Egil made a stave :

‘Thus counselled my mother,
For me should they purchase
A galley and good oars
To go forth a-roving.
So may I high-standing,
A noble barque steering,
Hold course for the haven,
Hew down many foemen.’

When Egil was twelve years old, he was grown so big that there were but few men howso large and strong that he could not overcome in games. In his twelfth winter he was often at games. Thord Grani's son was then twenty years

cld ; he was very strong. As the winter wore on, it often chanced that the two, Egil and Thord, were matched against Skallagrim. And once in the winter it so befell that there was ball-play at Borg, southwards in Sandvik. Thord and Egil were set against Skallagrim in the game ; and he became weary before them, so that they had the best of it. But in the evening after sunset it began to go worse with Egil and his partner. Skallagrim then became so strong that he caught up Thord and dashed him down so violently that he was all bruised and at once got his bane. Then he seized Egil. Now there was a handmaid of Skallagrim's named Thorgerdr Brak, who had nursed Egil when a child ; she was a big woman, strong as a man, and of magic cunning. Said Brak :

‘ Dost thou turn thy shape-strength, Skallagrim, against thy son ? ’

Whereat Skallagrim let Egil loose, but clutched at her. She broke away and took to her heels with Skallagrim after her. So went they to the utmost point of Digr-a-ness. Then she leapt out from the rock into the water. Skallagrim hurled after her a great stone, which struck her between the shoulders, and neither ever came up again. The water there is now called Brakar-sound. But afterwards, in the evening, when they came home to Borg, Egil was very angry. Skallagrim and everybody else were set at table, but Egil had not yet come to his place. He went into the fire-hall, and up to the man who there had the overseeing of work and the management of moneys for Skallagrim, and was most dear to him. Egil dealt him his deathblow, then went to his seat. Skallagrim spoke not a word about it then, and thenceforward the matter was kept quiet. But father and son exchanged no word good or bad, and so that winter passed.

The next summer after this Thorolf came out, as was told above. And when he had been in Iceland one winter, in the spring following he made ready his ship in Brakar-sound. But when he was quite ready, then one day Egil went to his father, and asked him to give him an outfit.

‘ I wish,’ said he, ‘ to go out with Thorolf.’

Skallagrim asked if he had spoken at all on that matter with Thorolf. Egil said he had not. Skallagrim bade him

do that first. But when Egil started the question with Thorolf, he said :

‘Tis not likely that I shall take you abroad with me; if your father thinks he cannot manage you here in his house, I have no confidence for this, to take you with me to foreign lands; for it will not do to show there such temper as you do here.’

‘Maybe,’ said Egil, ‘neither of us will go.’

In the night came on a furious gale, a south-wester. But when it was dark, and now flood-tide, Egil came where the ship lay. He went out on to the ship, and outside the tenting; he cut asunder the cables that were on the seaward side; then, hurrying back to land by the bridge, he at once shot out the bridge, and cut the cables that were upon land. Then the ship was driven out into the firth. But when Thorolf’s men were aware that the ship was adrift, they jumped into the boat; but the wind was far too strong for them to get anything done. The ship drifted over to Duck-kyle, and on the islands there; but Egil went home to Borg.

And when people got to know of the trick that Egil had played, the more part blamed it. Egil said he should before long do Thorolf more harm and mischief if he would not take him away. But then others mediated between them, and the end was that Thorolf took Egil, and he went out with him that summer.

When Thorolf came on shipboard, at once taking the axe which Skallagrim had given into his hands, he cast it overboard into the deep so that it nevermore came up. Thorolf went his way in the summer, and his voyage sped well, and they came out to Hordaland. He at once stood northwards to Sogn. There it had happened in the winter that Brynjolf had fallen sick and died, and his sons had shared the heritage. Thord had Aurland, the estate on which his father had dwelt. He had become a liege-man of the king, and was made a baron. Thord’s daughter was named Rannveig, the mother of Thord and Helgi, this Thord being father of Ingiridr whom king Olaf had to wife. Helgi was father of Brynjolf, father of Serk, Sogn, and Svein.



CHAPTER XLI.

Of Bjorn.

BJORN got for his portion another good and valuable homestead. He did not become a liege-man of the king, wherefore he was called Bjorn Yeoman. He was right wealthy, and a great man. No sooner did Thorolf come off the sea than he went at once to Bjorn, and brought him Asgerdr his daughter. There was a joyful meeting. Asgerdr was a most beautiful and accomplished woman, wise and right skilful.

Thorolf went to see king Eric. And when they met, Thorolf greeted Eric from Skallagrim, and said that he had thankfully received the king's gift. He then brought out a good long-ship's sail, which he said Skallagrim had sent to the king. King Eric received the gift well, and bade Thorolf be with him for the winter. For this Thorolf thanked the king, but said : 'I must first go to Thorir ; with him I have an urgent errand.'

Then Thorolf went to Thorir, as he had said, and met there a right hearty welcome. Thorir bade him be with him. This Thorolf said he would accept ; 'and there is,' said he, 'one with me who must have lodging where I am ; he is my brother, and he has never before been away from home, and he needs that I look after him.'

Thorir said that Thorolf had every right, if he would, to bring more men with him thither. 'Your brother, too,' said he, 'we think, betters our company if he be at all like you.'

Then Thorolf went to his ship, and had it drawn up and made snug, whereafter he and Egil went to lord Thorir. Thorir had a son named Arinbjorn, who was somewhat older than Egil. Arinbjorn early showed himself a manly fellow and a doughty. With Arinbjorn Egil struck up a friendship, and was ever his follower. But between the brothers was rather a coolness.



CHAPTER XLII.

Thorolf asks Asgerdr to wife.

THOROLF Skallagrim's son now sounded Thorir as to how he would take the matter should Thorolf ask in marriage Asgerdr his kinswoman. Thorir welcomed this readily, saying that he would be his pleader in this suit. Soon after Thorolf went north to Sogn with a goodly company. He came to Bjorn's house, and was well received there. Bjorn bade him be with him as long as he would. Thorolf speedily opened to Bjorn his errand, and made his offer, asking Bjorn's daughter Asgerdr to wife. This proposal Bjorn took well, his consent was easily won; and it was settled that the betrothal should be there, and a day was fixed for the wedding. The feast was to be at Bjorn's in the autumn.

Then Thorolf went back to Thorir, and told him what had been done in his journey. Thorir was glad that the match was to be made. But when the time came that Thorolf should go to the feast, he bade men to go with him. First bade he Thorir and Arinbjorn and their house-carles, and some rich yeomen; and for the journey there was a large and goodly company.

But when the appointed day was near at hand that Thorolf should leave home, and the bridesmen were now come, then Egil fell sick, so that he could not go. Thorolf and his company had a large long-ship well equipt, and went on their way as had been agreed.



CHAPTER XLIII.

Of Aulvir and Egil.

HERE was a man named Aulvir, a house-carle of Thorir's, who was manager and bailiff over his estate. He had the getting in of debts, and was treasurer. Aulvir was past his youth, but was still quite a hale man. It so happened that Aulvir had to leave home to get in some rents of Thorir's that had stood over from

the spring. He had a row-boat, on board which went twelve of Thorir's house-carles. Just then Egil began to recover, and rose from his bed. He thought it was dull work at home when everybody was gone away. So he spoke with Aulvir, and said he would like to go with him. But Aulvir thought one good comrade would not overload them, as there was enough ship-room. So Egil prepared to go. He had his weapons, sword, halberd, and buckler.

They went their way when they were ready. They had the wind blowing hard against them, a sharp gale and troublesome; but they pursued their journey vigorously, taking to their oars. And their progress was such, that on the evening of a day they came to Atla-isle, and there put in to land. In this island, not far up from the shore, was a large farm belonging to king Eric. The overlooker thereof was a man named Bard. He was called Bard of Atla-isle, and was a good business man and worker; not of high birth, but much prized by the king and Gunnhilda.

Aulvir and his men drew up their ship beyond flood-tide mark. They then went to the farm buildings, and found Bard outside, and told him of their journey, and withal that they would fain be there for the night. Bard saw that they were very wet, and led them to a fire-hall that stood apart from the other buildings. There he had a large fire made for them, at which their clothes were dried. When they had put them on again, Bard came in. 'Now will we,' said he, 'set you a table here. I know you will be glad to sleep; you are weary from your wetting.'

Aulvir liked that well. Soon the table was set, and food given them, bread and butter and large bowls of curds set forth. Bard said: 'Right sorry am I that there is no ale in the house, that I might receive you as I would; you will have to make out with what there is.'

Aulvir and his folk were very thirsty, and drank up the curds. Then Bard had oat-drink brought in, and they drank that. 'I should like,' said Bard, 'to give you better drink if I had any.'

There was no lack of straw in the room. Then he bade them lie down to sleep.



CHAPTER XLIV.

The slaying of Bard.

KING ERIC and queen Gunnhilda came that same evening to Atla-isle, and Bard had prepared there a banquet for the king ; and there was to be there a sacrifice to the guardian spirits. Sumptuous was the banquet, and great the drinking within the hall.

‘Where is Bard ?’ asked the king ; ‘I see him not.’

Someone said : ‘Bard is outside supplying his guests.’

‘Who be these guests,’ said the king, ‘that he deemeth this more a duty than to be here within waiting on us ?’

The man said that some house-carles of lord Thorir were come thither.

The king said : ‘Go after them at once, and call them in hither.’

And so it was done, with the message that the king would fain see them.

Whereupon they came. The king received Aulvir well, and bade him sit in the high-seat facing himself, and his comrades outside him. They did so, Egil sitting next to Aulvir. Ale was then served to them to drink. Many toasts went round, and a horn should be drunk to each toast.

But as the evening wore on, many of Aulvir’s companions became helpless. Some remained in the room, though sick, some went out of doors. Bard busily plied them with drink. Then Egil took the horn which Bard had offered to Aulvir, and drank it off. Bard said that Egil was very thirsty, and brought him at once the horn again filled, and bade him drink it off. Egil took the horn, and recited a stave :

‘ Wizard-worshipper of cairns !
Want of ale thou couldst allege,
Here at spirits’ holy feast.
False deceiver thee I find.
Stranger guests thou didst beguile,
Cloaking thus thy churlish greed.
Bard, a niggard base art thou,
Treacherous trick on such to play.’

Bard bade him drink and stop that jeering. Egil drained every cup that came to him, drinking for Aulvir likewise.

Then Bard went to the queen and told her there was a man there who put shame on them, for, howsoever much he drank, he still said he was thirsty. The queen and Bard then mixed the drink with poison, and bare it in. Bard consecrated the cup, then gave it to the ale-maid. She carried it to Egil, and bade him drink. Egil then drew his knife and pricked the palm of his hand. He took the horn, scratched runes thereon, and smeared blood in them. He sang :

‘Write we runes around the horn,
Redden all the spell with blood ;
Wise words choose I for the cup
Wrought from branching horn of beast.
Drink we then, as drink we will,
Draught that cheerful bearer brings,
Learn what health abides in ale,
Holy ale that Bard hath bless’d.’

The horn burst asunder in the midst, and the drink was spilt on the straw below. Then Aulvir began to be faint. So Egil stood up, took Aulvir by the hand, and led him to the door. Egil shifted his cloak to his left side, and under the mantle held his sword. But when they came to the door, then came Bard after them with a full horn, and bade them drink a farewell cup. Egil stood in the door. He took the horn and drank it off ; then recited a stave :

‘Ale is borne to me, for ale
Aulvir now maketh pale.
From ox-horn I let pour
‘Twixt my lips the shower.
But blind thy fate to see
Blows thou bring’st on thee :
Full soon from Odin’s thane
Feel’st thou deadly rain.’

With that Egil threw down the horn, but gripped his sword and drew ; it was dark in the room. He thrust Bard right through the middle with the sword, so that the point went out at the back. Bard fell dead, the blood welling from the wound. Aulvir fell too, vomiting. Then Egil dashed out of the room ; it was pitch dark outside. Egil at once ran off from the buildings. But in the entrance-room it was now seen that Bard and Aulvir were fallen.

Then came the king, and bade them bring light ; where-

upon they saw what had happened, that Aulvir lay there senseless ; but Bard was slain, and the floor all streaming with blood. Then the king asked where was that big man who had drunk most that evening. Men said that he had gone out.

‘Seek him,’ said the king, ‘and bring him to me.’

Search was made for him round the premises, but nowhere was he found. But when they came to the detached fire-hall, there lay Aulvir’s comrades. The king’s men asked if Egil had come there at all. They said that he had run in, taken his weapons, and so out again.

This was told to the king. The king bade his men go with all speed and seize every ship or boat on the island.

‘But in the morning,’ said he, ‘when it is light, we must search all the island and slay the man.’



CHAPTER XLV.

Flight of Egil.

EGIL went in the night and sought the places where boats were. But wheresoever he came to the strand, men were always there before him. He went thus through the whole night, and found never a boat. But when day dawned, he was standing on a certain ness. He saw then another island, and between him and it lay a very wide sound. This was then his counsel : he took helmet, sword, and spear, breaking off the spear-shaft and casting it out into the sea ; but the weapons he wrapped round in his cloak, and made thereof a bundle which he bound on his back. Then he plunged into the water, nor stayed his swimming till he came to the island. It was called Sheppey ; it was an island of no great size covered with brushwood. There were cattle on it, both sheep and oxen, belonging to Atla-isle. But when he came to the island, he wrung his clothes dry.

By this time it was broad daylight, and the sun was risen. King Eric had Atla-island well searched as soon as it was light ; this took some time, the island being large,

and Egil was not found. Then the king made them row to other islands and seek him. It was evening when twelve men rowed to Sheppey. They were to look for Egil, and had also to bring from thence some cattle for slaughter. Egil saw the boat coming to the island ; he then lay down and hid himself in the brushwood before the boat came to land. They left three men behind with the boat ; but nine went up, and they separated into three search parties, with three in each. But when a rise in the ground was between them and the boat, then Egil stood up (having before got his weapons ready), and made straight across for the sea, and then along the shore. They who guarded the boat were not aware of it till Egil was upon them. He at once smote one with a death-blow ; but another took to his heels, and he had to leap up something of a bank. Egil followed him with a blow cutting off his foot. The third man leapt out into the boat, and pushed off with the pole. Egil drew the boat to him with the rope, and leapt out into it. Few blows were exchanged ere Egil slew him, and pushed him overboard. Then he took oars and rowed the boat away. He went all that night and the day after, nor stayed till he came to lord Thorir's.

As for Aulvir and his comrades, the king let them go in peace, as guiltless in this matter.

But the men who were in Sheppey were there for many nights, and killed cattle for food, and made a fire and cooked them, and piled a large fuel-heap on the side of the island looking towards Atla-isle, and set fire thereto, and let folk know their plight. When that was seen, men rowed out to them, and brought to land those who yet lived.

The king was by this time gone away ; he went to another banquet.

But of Aulvir there is this to be told, that he reached home before Egil, and Thorolf and Thorir had come home even before that. Aulvir told the tidings, the slaying of Bard and the rest that had there befallen, but of Egil's goings since he knew nothing. Thorolf was much grieved hereat, as also was Arinbjorn ; they thought that Egil would return nevermore. But the next morning Egil came home. Which when Thorolf knew, he rose up and went out to meet him, and asked in what way he had escaped, and

what tidings had befallen in his journey. Then Egil recited this stave :

‘From Norway king’s keeping,
From craft of Gunnhilda,
So I freed me (nor flaunt I
 Thefeat overbold),
That three, whom I wot not,
The warrior king’s liege-men,
Lie dead, to the high hall
 Of Hela downsped.’

Arinbjorn spoke well of this work, and said to his father that he would be bound to atone Egil with the king.

Thorir said, ‘It will be the common verdict that Bard got but his desert in being slain ; yet hath Egil wrought too much after the way of his kin, in looking little before him and braving a king’s wrath, which most men find a heavy burden. However, I will atone you, Egil, with the king for this time.’

Thorir went to find the king, but Arinbjorn remained at home and declared that one lot should befall them all. But when Thorir came to the king, he offered terms for Egil, his own bail, while the king should doom the fine. King Eric was very wroth, and it was hard to come to speech with him ; he said that what his father had said would prove true—that family would never be trustworthy. He bade Thorir arrange it thus : ‘Though I accept some atonement, Egil shall not be long harboured in my realm. But for the sake of thy intercession, Thorir, I will take a money fine for this man.’ The king fixed such fine as he thought fit ; Thorir paid it all and went home.



CHAPTER XLVI.

Of Thorolf’s and Egil’s harrying.

THOROLF and Egil stayed that winter with Thorir, and were made much of. But in spring they got ready a large war-ship and gathered men thereto, and in summer they went the eastern way and harried ; there won they much wealth and had many battles. They held on even to Courland, and made a peace for half a month with the men of the land and traded with them. But when this was ended,

then they took to harrying, and put in at divers places. One day they put in at the mouth of a large river, where was an extensive forest upon land. They resolved to go up the country, dividing their force into companies of twelve. They went through the wood, and it was not long before they came to peopled parts. There they plundered and slew men, but the people fled, till at last there was no resistance. But as the day wore on, Thorolf had the blast sounded to recall his men down to the shore. Then each turned back from where they were into the wood. But when Thorolf mustered his force, Egil and his company had not come down ; and the darkness of night was closing in, so that they could not, as they thought, look for him.

Now Egil and his twelve had gone through a wood and then saw wide plains and tillage. Hard by them stood a house. For this they made, and when they came there they ran into the house, but could see no one there. They took all the loose chattels that they came upon. There were many rooms, so this took them a long time. But when they came out and away from the house, an armed force was there between them and the wood, and this attacked them. High palings ran from the house to the wood ; to these Egil bade them keep close, that they might not be come at from all sides. They did so. Egil went first, then the rest, one behind the other, so near that none could come between.

The Courlanders attacked them vigorously, but mostly with spears and javelins, not coming to close quarters. Egil's party going forward along the fence did not find out till too late that another line of palings ran along on the other side, the space between narrowing till there was a bend and all progress barred. The Courlanders pursued after them into this pen, while some set on them from without, thrusting javelins and swords through the palings, while others cast clothes on their weapons. Egil's party were wounded, and after that taken, and all bound, and so brought home to the farmhouse.

The owner of that farm was a powerful and wealthy man ; he had a son grown up. Now they debated what they should do with their prisoners. The goodman said that he thought this were best counsel, to kill them one on the heels

of another. His son said that the darkness of night was now closing in, and no sport was thus gotten by their torture ; he bade them be let bide till the morning. So they were thrust into a room and strongly bound. Egil was bound hand and foot to a post. Then the room was strongly locked, and the Courlanders went into the dining-hall, ate, drank, and were merry.

Egil strained and worked at the post till he loosed it up from the floor. Then the post fell, and Egil slipped himself off it. Next he loosed his hands with his teeth. But when his hands were loose, he loosed therewith the bonds from his feet. And then he freed his comrades ; but when they were all loose they searched round for the likeliest place to get out. The room was made with walls of large wooden beams, but at one end thereof was a smooth planking. At this they dashed and broke it through. They had now come into another room ; this too had walls of wooden beams. Then they heard men's voices below under their feet. Searching about they found a trapdoor in the floor, which they opened. Thereunder was a deep vault ; down in it they heard men's voices. Then asked Egil what men were these. He who answered named himself Aki. Would he like to come up, asked Egil. Aki answered, they would like it much.

Then Egil and his comrades lowered into the vault the rope with which they had been bound, and drew up thence three men. Aki said that these were his two sons, and they were Danes, who had been made prisoners of war last summer.

'I was,' he said, 'well treated through the winter, and had the chief care of the goodman's property ; but the lads were enslaved and had a hard lot. In spring we made up our minds to run away, but were retaken. Then we were cast into this vault.'

'You must know all about the plan of this house,' said Egil ; 'where have we the best hope to get out ?'

Aki said that there was another plank partition : 'Break you up that, you will then come into a corn-store, whereout you may go as you will.'

Egil's men did so ; they broke up the planking, came into the granary, and thence out. It was pitch dark.

Then said Egil's comrades that they should hasten to the wood. But Egil said to Aki, 'If you know the house here, you can show us the way to some plunder.'

Aki said there was no lack of chattels. 'Here is a large loft in which the goodman sleeps; therein is no stint of weapons.'

Egil bade them go to that loft. But when they came to the staircase head they saw that the loft was open. A light was inside, and servants, who were making the beds. Egil bade some stay outside and watch that none came out. Egil ran into the loft, seized weapons, of which there was no lack. They slew all the men that were in there, and they armed themselves fully. Aki went to a trap-door in the floor and opened it, telling them that they should go down by this to the store-room below. They got a light and went thither. It was the goodman's treasury; there were many costly things, and much silver. There the men took them each a load and carried it out. Egil took under his arm a large mead-cask, and bare it so.

But when they came to the wood, then Egil stopped, and he said :

'This our going is all wrong, and not warlike. We have stolen the goodman's property without his knowing thereof. Never ought that shame to be ours. Go we back to the house, and let him know what hath befallen.'

All spoke against that, saying they would make for the ship.

Egil set down the mead-cask, then ran off, and sped him to the house. But when he came there, he saw that serving-lads were coming out of the kitchen with dishes and bearing them to the dining-hall. In the kitchen (he saw) was a large fire and kettles thereon. Thither he went. Great beams had been brought home and lighted, as was the custom there, by setting fire to the beam-end and so burning it lengthwise. Egil seized a beam, carried it to the dining-hall, and thrust the burning end under the eaves, and so into the birch bark of the roof, which soon caught fire. Some fagot-wood lay hard by; this Egil brought and piled before the hall-door. This quickly caught fire. But those who sate drinking within did not find it out till the flame burst in round the roof. Then they rushed to the door;

but there was no easy way out, both by reason of the fagot-wood, and because Egil kept the door, and slew most who strove to pass out either in the doorway or outside.

The goodman asked who had the care of the fire.

Egil answered, 'He has now the care of the fire whom you yester-even had thought least likely; nor will you wish to bake you hotter than I shall kindle; you shall have soft bath before soft bed, such as you meant to give to me and my comrades. Here now is that same Egil whom you bound hand and foot to the post in that room you shut so carefully. I will repay you your hospitality as you deserve.'

At this the goodman thought to steal out in the dark, but Egil was near, and dealt him his death-blow, as he did to many others. Brief moment was it ere the hall so burned that it fell in. Most of those who were within perished.

But Egil went back to the wood, where he found his comrades, and they all went together to the ship. Egil said he would have the mead-cask which he carried as his own special prize; it proved to be full of silver. Thorolf and his men were overjoyed when Egil came down. They put out from land as soon as day dawned; Aki and his two sons were with Egil's following. They sailed in the summer, now far spent, to Denmark, where they lay in wait for merchant-ships, and plundered when they got the chance.



CHAPTER XLVII.

Of the further harrying of Thorolf and Egil.

HAROLD GORMSSON had then taken the kingdom in Denmark, his father Gorm being now dead. The land was then open to harrying; freebooters often lay off the Danish coast. Aki knew Denmark well both by sea and land. So Egil inquired of him diligently where the places were that promised good booty. But when they came to Eyrar-sound, then Aki said that up on land there was a large trading town named Lundr; there, he said, was hope of plunder, but 'twas likely that the towns-men would make resistance.

The question was put before the men whether they

should go up or not. Opinions were much divided, some liking, some letting it ; then the matter was referred to the leaders. Thorolf was rather for going up. Then Egil was asked what counsel he thought good. He recited a stave :

‘ Wolf-battening warrior,
Wield we high gleaming swords.
In snake-fostering summer
Such deeds well beseem.
Lead up to Lundr :
Let laggards be none !
Spear-music ungentle
By sunset shall sound.’

After that they made them ready to go up, and they came to the town. But when the townsmen were aware of the enemy's coming, they made against them. A wooden wall was round the town ; they set men to guard this. A very fierce battle was there fought. Egil, with his following, charged fiercely on the gate nor spared himself. There was a great slaughter, the townsmen falling one upon another. It is said that Egil first entered the town, the others following. Then those of the town fled, and great was the slaughter. But Thorolf and his company plundered the town and took much wealth, and fired the buildings before they left. Then they went down to their ships.



CHAPTER XLVIII.

Of the banquet at earl Arnfid's.

THOROLF stood northwards with his force past Holland, and they put into a harbour there, as the wind drove them back. They did not plunder there. A little way up the country dwelt an earl named Arnfid. But when he heard that freebooters had come to land there, he sent his men to meet them with this errand, to know whether they wished for peace or war. Upon the messengers' coming to Thorolf with their errand, he said that they would not harry there, that there was no need to harry there or come with war-shield, the land being not wealthy. The messengers went back to the earl, and told him the issue of their errand : but

when the earl knew that he need not gather men for this cause, then he rode down without any armed force to meet the freebooters. When they met, all went well at the conference. The earl bade Thorolf to a banquet with him, and as many of his men as he would. Thorolf promised to go.

On the appointed day the earl had riding-horses sent down to meet them. Thorolf and Egil went, and they had thirty men with them. When they came to the earl, he received them well; they were led into the dining-hall. At once beer was brought in and given them to drink. They sate there till evening.

But before the tables were removed the earl said that they should cast lots to drink together in pairs, man and woman, so far as numbers would allow, but the odd ones by themselves. They cast then their lots into the skirt of a cloak, and the earl drew them out. The earl had a very beautiful daughter then in the flower of youth; the lot decreed that Egil should sit by her for the evening. She was going about the floor of the hall amusing herself. Egil stood up and went to the place in which the earl's daughter had sat during the day. But when all took their several seats, then the earl's daughter went to her place. She said in verse:

‘ Why sittest in my seat, youth ?
Thou seldom sure hast given
To wolf his warm flesh-banquet.
Alone I will mine own.
O'er carrion corse thou heard'st not
Croak hoarse the joying raven,
Nor wentest where sword-edges
In warfare madly met.’

Egil took her, and set her down by him. He sang :

‘ With bloody brand on-striding
Me bird of bane hath followed :
My hurtling spear hath sounded
In the swift Vikings' charge.
Raged wrathfully our battle,
Ran fire o'er foemen's roostrees ;
Sound sleepeth many a warrior
Slain in the city gate.’

They two then drank together for the evening, and were right merry. The banquet was of the best, on that day

and on the morrow. Then the rovers went to their ships, they and the earl parting in friendship with exchange of gifts.

Thorolf with his force then stood for the Brenn-islands. At that time these were a great lair of freebooters, because through the islands sailed many merchant-ships. Aki went home to his farms, and his sons with him. He was a very wealthy man, owning several farms in Jutland. He and Thorolf parted with affection, and pledged them to close friendship. But as autumn came on, Thorolf and his men sailed northward along the Norway coast till they reached the Firths, then went to lord Thorir.

He received them well, but Arinbjorn his son much better, who asked Egil to be there for the winter. Egil took this offer with thanks. But when Thorir knew of Arinbjorn's offer, he called it rather a hasty speech. 'I know not,' said he, 'how king Eric may like that; for after the slaying of Bard he said that he would not have Egil be here in the land.'

'You, father, can easily manage this with the king,' said Arinbjorn, 'so that he will not blame Egil's stay. You will ask Thorolf, your niece's husband, to be here; I and Egil will have one winter home.'

Thorir saw from this talk that Arinbjorn would have his way in this. So father and son offered Thorolf winter-home there, which he accepted. They were there through the winter with twelve men.

Two brothers there were named Thorvald Proud and Thorfid Strong, near kinsmen of Bjorn Yeoman, and brought up with him. Tall men they were and strong, of much energy and forward daring. They followed Bjorn so long as he went out roving; but when he settled down in quiet, then these brothers went to Thorolf, and were with him in his harrying; they were forecastle men in his ship. And when Egil took command of a ship, then Thorfid was his forecastle man. These brothers followed Thorolf throughout, and he valued them most of his crew.

They were of his company this winter, and sate next to the two brothers. Thorolf sate in the high seat over against Thorir, and drank with him; Egil sate as cup-mate over

against Arinbjorn. At all toasts the cup must cross the floor.

Lord Thorir went in the autumn to king Eric. The king received him exceedingly well. But when they began to talk together, Thorir begged the king not to take it amiss that he had Egil with him that winter. The king answered this well ; he said that Thorir might get from him what he would, but it should not have been so had any other man harboured Egil. But when Gunnhilda heard what they were talking of, then said she : 'This I think, Eric, that 'tis now going again as it has gone often before ; thou lendest easy ear to talk, nor bearest long in mind the ill that is done thee. And now thou wilt bring forward the sons of Skallagrim to this, that they will yet again smite down some of thy near kin. But though thou mayest choose to think Bard's slaying of no account, I think not so.'

The king answered : 'Thou, Gunnhilda, more than others provokest me to savageness ; yet time was when thou wert on better terms with Thorolf than now. However I will not take back my word about those brothers.'

'Thorolf was well here,' said she, 'before Egil made him bad ; but now I reckon no odds between them.'

Thorir went home when he was ready, and told the brothers the words of the king and of the queen.



CHAPTER XLIX.

Slaying of Thorvald Proud.

EYVIND SKREYJA and Alf were the names of two brothers of Gunnhilda, sons of Auzur Toti. They were tall and strong, and great traders. They were then made much of by king Eric and Gunnhilda. Not generally liked were they ; at this time they were young, but fully grown to manhood. It so befell in the spring that a great sacrifice was fixed to be held in the summer at Gaular. Here was the most renowned chief temple. Thither flocked numbers from the firths and from the fells, and from Sogn, and almost all the great men. King Eric went thither. Then

spoke Gunnhilda with her brothers : ' I would fain that you two should so manage matters in this crowded gathering, that ye get to slay one of the two sons of Skallagrim, or, better still, both.'

They said it should be done.

Lord Thorir made ready to go thither. He called Arinbjorn to speak with him. ' Now will I,' said he, ' go to the sacrifice, but I will not that Egil go thither. I know the craft of Gunnhilda, the vehemence of Egil, the power of the king ; no easy task were it to watch these all at once. But Egil will not let himself be hindered, unless you stay behind. Now Thorolf and the rest of his company shall go with me ; Thorolf shall sacrifice and pray for happiness for his brother as well as himself.'

Whereupon Arinbjorn told Egil that he meant to stay at home ; ' and you shall be with me,' said he.

Egil agreed that it should be so.

But Thorir and the rest went to sacrifice, and a very great multitude was there, and there was much drinking. Thorolf went with Thorir wheresoever he went, and they never were apart day or night. Eyvind told Gunnhilda that he could get no chance at Thorolf. She bade him then slay some one of Thorolf's men rather than let everything fail.

It chanced one evening, when the king had gone to rest, as had also Thorir and Thorolf, but Thorfid and Thorvald still sate up, that the two brothers Eyvind and Alf came and sate down by them, and were very merry. First they drank as one drinking-party ; but presently it came to this, that each should drink half a horn, Eyvind and Thorvald being paired together to drink, and Alf and Thorfid.

Now as the evening wore on there was unfair drinking ; next followed bandying of words, then insulting language. Then Eyvind jumped up, drew a sword, and thrust at Thorvald, dealing him a wound that was his death. Whereupon up jumped on either side the king's men and Thorir's housecarles. But men were all weaponless in there, because it was sanctuary. Men went between and parted them who were most furious ; nor did anything more happen that evening.

Eyvind had slain a man on holy ground ; he was there-

fore made accursed, and had to go abroad at once. The king offered a fine for the man ; but Thorolf and Thorfid said they never had taken man-fine, and would not take this. With that they parted. Thorir and his company went home. King Eric and Gunnhilda sent Eyvind south to Denmark to king Harold Gormsson, for he might not now abide on Norwegian soil. The king received him and his comrades well : Eyvind brought to Denmark a large war-ship. He then appointed Eyvind to be his coastguard there against freebooters, for Eyvind was a right good warrior.

In the spring following that winter Thorolf and Egil made them ready to go again a-freebooting. And when ready, they again stood for the eastern way. But when they came to Vik, they sailed then south along Jutland, and harried there ; then went to Friesland, where they stayed for a great part of the summer ; but then stood back for Denmark. But when they came to the borderland where Denmark and Friesland meet, and lay by the land there, so it was that one evening when they on shipboard were preparing for sleep, two men came to Egil's ship, and said they had an errand to him. They were brought before him. They said that Aki the wealthy had sent them thither with this message : 'Eyvind Skreyja is lying out off Jutland-side, and thinks to waylay you as you come from the south. And he has gathered such large force as ye cannot withstand if ye encounter it all at once ; but he himself goes with two light vessels, and he is even now here close by you.'

But when these tidings came before Egil, at once he and his took down their tenting. He bade them go silently ; they did so. They came at dawn to where Eyvind and his men lay at anchor ; they set upon them at once, hurling both stones and spears. Many of Eyvind's force fell there ; but he himself leapt overboard and got to land by swimming, as did all those of his men who escaped. But Egil took his ships, cargo, and weapons.

They went back that day to their own company, and met Thorolf. He asked whither Egil had gone, and where he had gotten those ships with which they came. Egil said that Eyvind Skreyja had had the ships, but they had taken them from him. Then sang Egil :

'In struggle sternly hard
 We strove off Jutland-side :
 Well did the warrior fight,
 Warder of Denmark's realm.
 Till, with his wights o'erborne,
 Eastwards from wave-horse high
 To swim and seek the sand
 Swift Eyyvind Skreyja leapt.'

Thorolf said : 'Herein ye have so wrought, methinks, that it will not serve us as our autumn plan to go to Norway.'

Egil said it was quite as well, though they should seek some other place.



CHAPTER L.

Of Athelstan king of the English.

ALFRED THE GREAT ruled England, being of his family the first supreme king over England. That was in the days of Harold Fairhair, king of Norway. After Alfred, Edward his son was king in England. He was father of Athelstan the Victorious, who was foster-father of Hacon the Good. It was at this time of our story that Athelstan took the kingdom after his father. There were several brothers sons of Edward.

But when Athelstan had taken the kingdom, then those chieftains who had before lost their power to his forefathers rose in rebellion ; now they thought was the easiest time to claim back their own, when a young king ruled the realm. These were Britons, Scots, and Irish. King Athelstan therefore gathered him an army, and gave pay to all such as wished to enrich themselves, both foreigners and natives.

The brothers Thorolf and Egil were standing southwards along Saxony and Flanders, when they heard that the king of England wanted men, and that there was in his service hope of much gain. So they resolved to take their force thither. And they went on that autumn till they came to king Athelstan. He received them well ; he saw plainly that such followers would be a great help. Full soon did the English king decide to ask them to join him, to take pay there, and become defenders of his land. They

so agreed between them that they became king Athelstan's men.

England was thoroughly Christian in faith, and had long been so, when these things happened. King Athelstan was a good Christian ; he was called Athelstan the Faithful. The king asked Thorolf and his brother to consent to take the first signing with the cross, for this was then a common custom both with merchants and those who took soldiers' pay in Christian armies, since those who were 'prime-signed' (as 'twas termed) could hold all intercourse with Christians and heathens alike, while retaining the faith which was most to their mind. Thorolf and Egil did this at the king's request, and both let themselves be prime-signed. They had there three hundred men with them who took the king's pay.



CHAPTER LI.

Of Olaf king of Scots.

OLAF THE RED was the name of the king in Scotland. He was Scotch on his father's side, but Danish on his mother's side, and came of the family of Ragnar Hairy-breeks. He was a powerful prince. Scotland, as compared with England, was reckoned a third of the realm ; Northumberland was reckoned a fifth part of England ; it was the northernmost county, marching with Scotland on the eastern side of the island. Formerly the Danish kings had held it. Its chief town is York. It was in Athelstan's dominions ; he had set over it two earls, the one named Alfgeir, the other Gudrek. They were set there as defenders of the land against the inroads of Scots, Danes, and Norsemen, who harried the land much, and thought they had a strong claim on the land there, because in Northumberland nearly all the inhabitants were Danish by the father's or mother's side, and many by both.

Bretland was governed by two brothers, Hring and Adils ; they were tributaries under king Athelstan, and withal had this right, that when they were with the king in the field, they and their force should be in the van of the battle

before the royal standard. These brothers were right good warriors, but not young men.

Alfred the Great had deprived all tributary kings of name and power; they were now called earls, who had before been kings or princes. This was maintained throughout his lifetime and his son Edward's. But Athelstan came young to the kingdom, and of him they stood less in awe. Wherefore many now were disloyal who had before been faithful subjects.



CHAPTER LII.

Of the gathering of the host.

OLAF king of Scots, drew together a mighty host, and marched upon England. When he came to Northumberland, he advanced with shield of war. On learning this, the earls who ruled there mustered their force and went against the king. And when they met there was a great battle, whereof the issue was that king Olaf won the victory, but earl Gudrek fell, and Alfgeir fled away, as did the greater part of the force that had followed them and escaped from the field. And now king Olaf found no further resistance, but subdued all Northumberland.

Alfgeir went to king Athelstan, and told him of his defeat. But as soon as king Athelstan heard that so mighty a host was come into his land, he despatched men and summoned forces, sending word to his earls and other nobles. And with such force as he had he at once turned him and marched against the Scots. But when it was bruited about that Olaf king of Scots had won a victory and subdued under him a large part of England, he soon had a much larger army than Athelstan, for many nobles joined him. And on learning this, Hring and Adils, who had gathered much people, turned to swell king Olaf's army. Thus their numbers became exceeding great.

All this when Athelstan learned, he summoned to conference his captains and his counsellors; he inquired of them what were best to do; he told the whole council point by point what he had ascertained about the doings of the

Scots' king and his numbers. All present were agreed on this, that Alfgær was most to blame, and thought it were but his due to lose his earldom. But the plan resolved on was this, that king Athelstan should go back to the south of England, and then for himself hold a levy of troops, coming northwards through the whole land; for they saw that the only way for the needful numbers to be levied in time was for the king himself to gather the force.

As for the army already assembled, the king set over it as commanders Thorolf and Egil. They were also to lead that force which the freebooters had brought to the king. But Alfgær still held command over his own troops. Further, the king appointed such captains of companies as he thought fit.

When Egil returned from the council to his fellows, they asked him what tidings he could tell them of the Scots' king. He sang :

‘ Olaf one earl by furious
Onslaught in flight hath driven,
The other slain : a sovereign
Stubborn in fight is he.
Upon the field fared Gudrek
False path to his undoing.
He holds, this foe of England,
Northumbria’s humbled soil.’

After this they sent messengers to king Olaf, giving out this as their errand, that king Athelstan would fain enhazel him a field and offer battle on Vin-heath by Vin-wood; meanwhile he would have them forbear to harry his land; but of the twain he should rule England who should conquer in the battle. He appointed a week hence for the conflict, and whichever first came on the ground should wait a week for the other. Now this was then the custom, that so soon as a king had enhazelled a field, it was a shameful act to harry before the battle was ended. Accordingly King Olaf halted and harried not, but waited till the appointed day, when he moved his army to Vin-heath.

North of the heath stood a town. There in the town king Olaf quartered him, and there he had the greatest part of his force, because there was a wide district around which seemed to him convenient for the bringing in of such pro-

visions as the army needed. But he sent men of his own up to the heath where the battlefield was appointed ; these were to take camping-ground, and make all ready before the army came. But when the men came to the place where the field was enhazelled, there were all the hazel-poles set up to mark the ground where the battle should be.

The place ought to be chosen level, and whereon a large host might be set in array. And such was this ; for in the place where the battle was to be the heath was level, with a river flowing on one side, on the other a large wood. But where the distance between the wood and the river was least (though this was a good long stretch), there king Athelstan's men had pitched, and their tents quite filled the space between wood and river. They had so pitched that in every third tent there were no men at all, and in one of every three but few. Yet when king Olaf's men came to them, they had then numbers swarming before all the tents, and the others could not get to go inside. Athelstan's men said that their tents were all full, so full that their people had not nearly enough room. But the front line of tents stood so high that it could not be seen over them whether they stood many or few in depth. Olaf's men imagined a vast host must be there. King Olaf's men pitched north of the hazel-poles, toward which side the ground sloped a little.

From day to day Athelstan's men said that the king would come, or was come, to the town that lay south of the heath. Meanwhile forces flocked to them both day and night.

But when the appointed time had expired, then Athelstan's men sent envoys to king Olaf with these words : 'King Athelstan is ready for battle, and has a mighty host. But he sends to king Olaf these words, that he would fain they should not cause so much bloodshed as now looks likely ; he begs Olaf rather to go home to Scotland, and Athelstan will give him as a friendly gift one shilling of silver from every plough through all his realm, and he wishes that they should become friends.'

When the messengers came to Olaf he was just beginning to make ready his army, and purposing to attack. But on the messengers declaring their errand, he forebore to

advance for that day. Then he and his captains sate in council. Wherein opinions were much divided. Some strongly desired that these terms should be taken ; they said that this journey had already won them great honour, if they should go home after receiving so much money from Athelstan. But some were against it, saying that Athelstan would offer much more the second time, were this refused. And this latter counsel prevailed. Then the messengers begged king Olaf to give them time to go back to king Athelstan, and try if he would pay yet more money to ensure peace. They asked a truce of one day for their journey home, another for deliberation, a third to return to Olaf. The king granted them this.

The messengers went home, and came back on the third day according to promise ; they now said to king Olaf that Athelstan would give all that he offered before, and over and above, for distribution among king Olaf's soldiers, a shilling to every freeborn man, a silver mark to every officer of a company of twelve men or more, a gold mark to every captain of the king's guard, and five gold marks to every earl. Then the king laid this offer before his forces. It was again as before ; some opposed this, some desired it. In the end the king gave a decision : he said he would accept these terms, if this too were added, that king Athelstan let him have all Northumberland with the tributes and dues thereto belonging. Again the messengers ask armistice of three days, with this further, that king Olaf should send his men to hear Athelstan's answer, whether he would take these terms or no ; they say that to their thinking Athelstan will hardly refuse anything to ensure peace. King Olaf agreed to this and sent his men to king Athelstan.

Then the messengers ride all together, and find king Athelstan in the town that was close to the heath on the south. King Olaf's messengers declare before Athelstan their errand and the proposals for peace. King Athelstan's men told also with what offers they had gone to king Olaf, adding that this had been the counsel of wise men, thus to delay the battle so long as the king had not come.

But king Athelstan made a quick decision on this matter,

and thus bespeak the messengers: 'Bear ye these my words to king Olaf, that I will give him leave for this, to go home to Scotland with his forces; only let him restore all the property that he has wrongfully taken here in the land. Then make we peace between our lands, neither harrying the other. Further be it provided that king Olaf shall become my vassal, and hold Scotland for me, and be my under-king. Go now back,' said he, 'and tell him this.'

At once that same evening the messengers turned back on their way, and came to king Olaf about midnight; they then waked up the king, and told him straightway the words of king Athelstan. The king instantly summoned his earls and other captains; he then caused the messengers to come and declare the issue of their errand and the words of Athelstan. But when this was made known before the soldiers, all with one mouth said that this was now before them, to prepare for battle. The messengers said this too, that Athelstan had a numerous force, but he had come into the town on that same day when the messengers came there.

Then spoke earl Adils, 'Now, methinks, that has come to pass, O king, which I said, that ye would find tricksters in the English. We have sat here long time and waited while they have gathered to them all their forces, whereas their king can have been nowhere near when we came here. They will have been assembling a multitude while we were sitting still. Now this is my counsel, O king, that we two brothers ride at once forward this very night with our troop. It may be they will have no fear for themselves, now they know that their king is near with a large army. So we shall make a dash upon them. But if they turn and fly, they will lose some of their men, and be less bold afterwards for conflict with us.'

The king thought this good counsel. 'We will here make ready our army,' said he, 'as soon as it is light, and move to support you.'

This plan they fixed upon, and so ended the council.



CHAPTER LIII.

Of the fight.

EARL HRING and Adils his brother made ready their army, and at once in the night moved southwards for the heath. But when day dawned, Thorolf's sentries saw the army approaching. Then was a war-blast blown, and men donned their arms. After that they began to draw up the force, and they had two divisions. Earl Alfgeir commanded one division, and the standard was borne before him. In that division were his own followers, and also what force had been gathered from the countryside. It was a much larger force than that which followed Thorolf and Egil.

Thorolf was thus armed. He had a shield ample and stout, a right strong helmet on his head ; he was girded with the sword that he called Long, a weapon large and good. In his hand he had a halberd, whereof the feather-formed blade was two ells long, ending in a four-edged spike ; the blade was broad above, the socket both long and thick. The shaft stood just high enough for the hand to grasp the socket, and was remarkably thick. The socket fitted with iron prong on the shaft, which was also wound round with iron. Such weapons were called mail-piercers.

Egil was armed in the same way as Thorolf. He was girded with the sword that he called Adder ; this he had gotten in Courland ; it was a right good weapon. Neither of the two had shirt of mail.

They set up their standard, which was borne by Thorfid the Strong. All their men had Norwegian shields and Norwegian armour in every point ; and in their division were all the Norsemen who were present. Thorolf's force was drawn up near the wood, Alfgeir's moved along the river.

Earl Adils and his brother saw that they would not come upon Thorolf unawares, so they began to draw up their force. They also made two divisions, and had two standards. Adils was opposed to earl Alfgeir, Hring to the freebooters. The battle now began ; both charged with spirit. Earl

Adils pressed on hard and fast till Alfgeir gave ground ; then Adils' men pressed on twice as boldly. Nor was it long before Alfgeir fled. And this is to be told of him, that he rode away south over the heath, and a company of men with him. He rode till he came near the town, where sat the king.

Then spake the earl : 'I deem it not safe for us to enter the town. We got sharp words of late when we came to the king after defeat by king Olaf ; and he will not think our case bettered by this coming. No need to expect honour where he is.'

Then he rode to the south country, and of his travel 'tis to be told that he rode night and day till he and his came westwards to Earls-ness. Then the earl got a ship to take him southwards over the sea ; and he came to France, where half of his kin were. He never after returned to England.

Adils at first pursued the flying foe, but not far ; then he turned back to where the battle was, and made an onset there. This when Thorolf saw, he said that Egil should turn and encounter him, and bade the standard be borne that way ; his men he bade hold well together and stand close.

'Move we to the wood,' said he, 'and let it cover our back, so that they may not come at us from all sides.'

They did so ; they followed along the wood. Fierce was the battle there. Egil charged against Adils, and they had a hard fight of it. The odds of numbers were great, yet more of Adils' men fell than of Egil's.

Then Thorolf became so furious that he cast his shield on his back, and, grasping his halberd with both hands, bounded forward dealing cut and thrust on either side. Men sprang away from him both ways, but he slew many. Thus he cleared the way forward to earl Hring's standard, and then nothing could stop him. He slew the man who bore the earl's standard, and cut down the standard-pole. After that he lunged with his halberd at the earl's breast, driving it right through mail-coat and body, so that it came out at the shoulders ; and he lifted him up on the halberd over his head, and planted the butt-end in the ground. There on the weapon the earl breathed out his life in sight of all, both friends and foes. Then Thorolf drew his sword

and dealt blows on either side, his men also charging. Many Britons and Scots fell, but some turned and fled.

But Earl Adils seeing his brother's fall, and the slaughter of many of his force, and the flight of some, while himself was in hard stress, turned to fly, and ran to the wood. Into the wood fled he and his company; and then all the force that had followed the earl took to flight. Thorolf and Egil pursued the flying foe. Great was then the slaughter; the fugitives were scattered far and wide over the heath. Earl Adils had lowered his standard; so none could know his company from others.

And soon the darkness of night began to close in. Thorolf and Egil returned to their camp; and just then king Athelstan came up with the main army, and they pitched their tents and made their arrangements. A little after came king Olaf with his army; they, too, encamped and made their arrangements where their men had before placed their tents. Then it was told king Olaf that both his earls Hring and Adils were fallen, and a multitude of his men likewise.



CHAPTER LIV.

The fall of Thorolf.

King Athelstan had passed the night before in the town whereof mention was made above, and there he heard rumour that there had been fighting on the heath. At once he and all the host made ready and marched northwards to the heath. There they learnt all the tidings clearly, how that battle had gone. Then the brothers Thorolf and Egil came to meet the king. He thanked them much for their brave advance, and the victory they had won; he promised them his hearty friendship. They all remained together for the night.

No sooner did day dawn than Athelstan waked up his army. He held conference with his captains, and told them how his forces should be arranged. His own division he first arranged, and in the van thereof he set those companies that were the smartest.

Then he said that Egil should command these: 'But

Thorolf,' said he, 'shall be with his own men and such others as I add thereto. This force shall be opposed to that part of the enemy which is loose and not in set array, for the Scots are ever loose in array; they run to and fro, and dash forward here and there. Often they prove dangerous if men be not wary, but they are unsteady in the field if boldly faced.'

Egil answered the king: 'I will not that I and Thorolf be parted in the battle; rather to me it seems well that we two be placed there where is like to be most need and hardest fighting.'

Thorolf said, 'Leave we the king to rule where he will place us, serve we him as he likes best. I will, if you wish it, change places with you.'

Egil said, 'Brother, you will have your way; but this separation I shall often rue.'

After this they formed in the divisions as the king had arranged, and the standards were raised. The king's division stood on the plain towards the river; Thorolf's division moved on the higher ground beside the wood. King Olaf drew up his forces when he saw king Athelstan had done so. He also made two divisions; and his own standard, and the division that himself commanded, he opposed to king Athelstan and his division. Either had a large army, there was no difference on the score of numbers. But king Olaf's second division moved near the wood against the force under Thorolf. The commanders thereof were Scotch earls, the men mostly Scots; and it was a great multitude.

And now the armies closed, and soon the battle waxed fierce. Thorolf pressed eagerly forward, causing his standard to be borne onwards along the woodside; he thought to go so far forward as to turn upon the Scotch king's division behind their shields. His own men held their shields before them; they trusted to the wood which was on their right to cover that side. So far in advance went Thorolf that few of his men were before him. But just when he was least on his guard, out leapt from the wood earl Adils and his followers. They thrust at Thorolf at once with many halberds, and there by the wood he fell. But Thorfid, who bore the standard, drew back to where the men stood thicker. Adils now attacked them, and a fierce contest was there. The

Scots shouted a shout of victory, as having slain the enemy's chieftain.

This shout when Egil heard, and saw Thorolf's standard going back, he felt sure that Thorolf himself would not be with it. So he bounded thither over the space between the two divisions. Full soon learnt he the tidings of what was done, when he came to his men. Then did he keenly spur them on to the charge, himself foremost in the van. He had in his hand his sword Adder. Forward Egil pressed, and hewed on either hand of him, felling many men. Thorfid bore the standard close after him, behind the standard followed the rest. Right sharp was the conflict there. Egil went forward till he met earl Adils. Few blows did they exchange ere earl Adils fell, and many men around him. But after the earl's death his followers fled. Egil and his force pursued, and slew all whom they overtook; no need there to beg quarter. Nor stood those Scotch earls long, when they saw the others their fellows fly; but at once they took to their heels.

Whereupon Egil and his men made for where king Olaf's division was, and coming on them behind their shields soon wrought great havoc. The division wavered, and broke up. Many of king Olaf's men then fled, and the Norsemen shouted a shout of victory.

But when king Athelstan perceived king Olaf's division beginning to break, he then spurred on his force, and bade his standard advance. A fierce onset was made, so that king Olaf's force recoiled, and there was a great slaughter. King Olaf fell there, and the greater part of the force which he had had, for of those who turned to fly all who were overtaken were slain. Thus king Athelstan gained a signal victory.



CHAPTER LV.

Egil buries Thorolf.

WHILE his men still pursued the fugitives, king Athelstan left the battle-field, and rode back to the town, nor stayed he for the night before he came thither. But Egil pursued the flying foe, and

followed them far, slaying every man whom he overtook. At length, sated with pursuit, he with his followers turned back, and came where the battle had been, and found there the dead body of his brother Thorolf. He took it up, washed it, and performed such other offices as were the wont of the time. They dug a grave there, and laid Thorolf therein with all his weapons and raiment. Then Egil clasped a gold bracelet on either wrist before he parted from him ; this done they heaped on stones and cast in mould. Then Egil sang a stave :

‘ Dauntless the doughty champion
Dashed on, the earl’s bold slayer :
In stormy stress of battle
Stout-hearted Thorolf fell.
Green grows on soil of Vin-heath
Grass o’er my noble brother :
But we our woe—a sorrow
Worse than death-pang—must bear.’

And again he further sang :

‘ With warriors slain round standard
The western field I burdened ;
Adils with my blue Adder
Assailed mid snow of war.
Olaf, young prince, encountered
England in battle thunder :
Hring stood not stour of weapons,
Starved not the ravens’ maw.’

Then went Egil and those about him to seek king Athelstan, and at once went before the king, where he sat at the drinking. There was much noise of merriment. And when the king saw that Egil was come in, he bade the lower bench be cleared for them, and that Egil should sit in the high-seat facing the king. Egil sat down there, and cast his shield before his feet. He had his helm on his head, and laid his sword across his knees ; and now and again he half drew it, then clashed it back into the sheath. He sat upright, but with head bent forward.

Egil was large-featured, broad of forehead, with large eyebrows, a nose not long but very thick, lips wide and long, chin exceeding broad, as was all about the jaws ; thick-necked was he, and big-shouldered beyond other men, hard-featured, and grim when angry. He was well-

made, more than commonly tall, had hair wolf-gray and thick, but became early bald. He was black-eyed and brown-skinned.

But as he sat (as was before written), he drew one eyebrow down towards the cheek, the other up to the roots of the hair. He would not drink now, though the horn was borne to him, but alternately twitched his brows up and down. King Athelstan sat in the upper high-seat. He too laid his sword across his knees. When they had sat there for a time, then the king drew his sword from the sheath, and took from his arm a gold ring large and good, and placing it upon the sword-point he stood up, and went across the floor, and reached it over the fire to Egil. Egil stood up and drew his sword, and went across the floor. He stuck the sword-point within the round of the ring, and drew it to him; then he went back to his place. The king sate him again in his high-seat. But when Egil was set down, he drew the ring on his arm, and then his brows went back to their place. He now laid down sword and helm, took the horn that they bare to him, and drank it off. Then sang he :

Mailed monarch, god of battle,
Maketh the tinkling circlet
Hang, his own arm forsaking,
On hawk-trod wrist of mine.
I bear on arm brand-wielding
Bracelet of red gold gladly.
War-falcon's feeder meetly
Findeth such meed of praise.'

Thereafter Egil drank his share, and talked with others. Presently the king caused to be borne in two chests; two men bare each. Both were full of silver.

The king said : ' These chests, Egil, thou shalt have, and, if thou comest to Iceland, shalt carry this money to thy father; as payment for a son I send it to him: but some of the money thou shalt divide among such kinsmen of thyself and Thorolf as thou thinkest most honourable. But thou shalt take here payment for a brother with me, land or chattels, which thou wilt. And if thou wilt abide with me long, then will I give thee honour and dignity such as thyself mayst name.'

Egil took the money, and thanked the king for his gifts and friendly words. Thenceforward Egil began to be cheerful ; and then he sang :

‘ In sorrow sadly drooping
Sank my brows close-knitted ;
Then found I one who furrows
Of forehead could smooth.
Fierce frowning cliffs that shaded
My face a king hath lifted
With gleam of golden armlet :
Gloom leaveth my eyes.’

Then those men were healed whose wounds left hope of life. Egil abode with king Athelstan for the next winter after Thorolf's death, and had very great honour from the king. With Egil was then all that force which had followed the two brothers, and come alive out of the battle. Egil now made a poem about king Athelstan, and in it is this stave :

‘ Land-shielder, battle-quickener,
Low now this scion royal
Earls three hath laid. To Ella
Earth must obedient bow.
Lavish of gold, kin-glorious,
Great Athelstan victorious,
Surely, I swear, all humbled
To such high monarch yields.’

But this is the burden in the poem :

‘ Reindeer-trod hills obey
Bold Athelstan's high sway.’

Then gave Athelstan further to Egil as poet's meed two gold rings, each weighing a mark, and therewith a costly cloak that the king himself had formerly worn.

But when spring came Egil signified to the king this, that he purposed to go away in the summer to Norway, and to learn ‘ how matters stand with Asgerdr, my late brother Thorolf's wife. A large property is there in all ; but I know not whether there be children of theirs living. I am bound to look after them, if they live ; but I am heir to all, if Thorolf died childless.’

The king answered, ‘ This will be, Egil, for you to arrange, to go away hence, if you think you have an errand of duty ;

but I think 'twere the best way that you should settle down here with me on such terms as you like to ask.'

Egil thanked the king for his words.

'I will,' he said, 'now first go, as I am in duty bound to do; but it is likely that I shall return hither to see after this promise so soon as I can.'

The king bade him do so.

Whereupon Egil made him ready to depart with his men; but of these many remained behind with the king. Egil had one large war-ship, and on board thereof a hundred men or thereabouts. And when he was ready for his voyage, and a fair wind blew, he put out to sea. He and king Athelstan parted with great friendship: the king begged Egil to return as soon as possible. This Egil promised to do.

Then Egil stood for Norway, and when he came to land sailed with all speed into the Firths. He heard these tidings, that lord Thorir was dead, and Arinbjorn had taken inheritance after him, and was made a baron. Egil went to Arinbjorn and got there a good welcome. Arinbjorn asked him to stay there. Egil accepted this, had his ship set up, and his crew lodged. But Arinbjorn received Egil and twelve men; they stayed with him through the winter.



CHAPTER LVI.

Marriage of Egil.

BERGONUND son of Thorgeir Thornfoot had then married Gunnhilda daughter of Bjorn Yeoman. She had come to keep house with him at Askr. But Asgerdr, whom Thorolf Skallagrimsson had had to wife, was then with Arinbjorn, her kinsman. Thorolf and she had a daughter named Thordis, and the girl was there with her mother. Egil told Asgerdr of Thorolf's death, and offered her his guardianship. Asgerdr was much grieved at the tidings; she answered Egil's words well, saying however but little one way or the other.

But, as autumn wore on, Egil began to be very gloomy and drank little, and often sat with his head drooping in his cloak. One time Arinbjorn went to him and asked what meant his gloom.

‘Though now you have had a great loss in your brother, yet ‘tis manly to bear up well; man must overlive man. Come, what verse are you now repeating? Let me hear.’

Egil said he had just made this verse:

‘Unfriendly, who was friend,
Fair goddess seems. Of old
Bold with uplifted brow
Beheld I woman’s face.
Now one (whose name I veil)
No sooner to the skald
Occurs, than shyly sinks
Screen’d in his cloak his head.’

Arinbjorn asked who was the woman about whom he composed such love-song. ‘Have you hidden her name in this stave?’

Then Egil recited:

‘Sorrow shows not, but hides
The saddening thought within.
Names in my poesy
Not oft I use to veil.
For Odin’s warrior wights
Will surely searching find
In war-god’s wine of song
What poet deep hath plunged.’

‘Here,’ said Egil, ‘will the old saw be found true. All should be told to a friend. I will tell you that which you ask, about what woman I compose verse. ’Tis Asgerdr your kinswoman; and I would fain have your furtherance to secure this match.’

Arinbjorn said that he deemed it well thought of. ‘I will,’ said he, ‘surely give my good word that this match may be made.’

Then Egil laid this matter before Asgerdr, but she referred it to the decision of her father and her kinsman Arinbjorn. Arinbjorn talked with Asgerdr, and she made the same answer. Arinbjorn was desirous of this match. After this Arinbjorn and Egil went together to Bjorn, and then Egil made his suit and asked to wife Asgerdr Bjorn’s daughter. Bjorn took this matter well, and said that Arinbjorn should

chiefly decide this. Arinbjorn greatly desired it; and the end of the matter was that Egil and Asgerdr were betrothed, and the wedding was to be at Arinbjorn's.

And when the appointed time came, there was a very grand feast at Egil's marriage. He was then very cheerful for the remaining part of the winter. In the spring he made ready a merchant-ship for a voyage to Iceland. Arinbjorn advised him not to settle in Norway while Gunnhilda's power was so great. 'For she is very wroth with you,' said Arinbjorn; 'and this has been made much **worse** by your encounter with Eyvind near Jutland.'

But when Egil was ready, and a fair wind blew, he sailed out to sea, and his voyage sped well. He came in the autumn to Iceland, and stood into Borgar-firth. He had now been out twelve winters. Skallagrim was an old man by this time. Full glad was he when Egil came home. Egil went to lodge at Borg, and with him Thorfid Strong and many of their company; and they were there with Skallagrim for the winter. Egil had immense store of wealth; but it is not told that Egil shared that silver which king Athelstan had given him either with Skallagrim or others. That winter Thorfid married Sæunn, Skallagrim's daughter; and in the following spring Skallagrim gave them a homestead at Long-river-foss, and the land inwards from Leiru-brook between Long-river and Swan-river, even up to the fell. Daughter of Thorfid and Sæunn was Thordis wife to Arngeir in Holm, the son of Bersi Godless. Their son was Bjorn, Hitadale's champion.

Egil abode there with Skallagrim several winters. He took upon him the management of the property and farm no less than Skallagrim. Egil became more and more bald. The country-side began now to be settled far and wide. Hromund, brother of Grim the Halogalander, settled at this time in Cross-river-lithe with his shipmates. Hromund was father of Gunnlaug, the father of Thuridr Dylla, mother of Illugi the Swarthy.

Egil had now been several winters at Borg with his father, when one summer a ship came from Norway to Iceland with these tidings from the east, that Bjorn Yeoman was dead. Further, it was told that all the property owned by Bjorn had been taken up by Bergonund, his son-in-law, who

had moved to his own home all loose chattels, letting out the lands, and securing to himself all the rents. He had also got possession of all the farms occupied of late by Bjorn. This when Egil heard, he inquired carefully whether Bjorn had acted on his own counsel in this matter, or had the support of others more powerful. It was told him that Onund was become a close friend of king Eric, but was on even more intimate terms with Gunnhilda.

Egil let the matter rest for this autumn ; but when winter was past and spring came, then Egil bade them draw out his ship, which had stood in the shed at Long-river-foss. This ship he made ready for sea, and got a crew thereto. Asgerdr his wife was to go with him, but Thordis Thorolf's daughter remained behind. Egil sailed out to sea when he was ready, and of his voyage there is nothing to tell before he came to Norway. He at once, as soon as he could, went to seek Arinbjorn. Arinbjorn received him well, and asked Egil to stay with him ; this offer he took. So both he and Asgerdr went thither and several men with them.

Egil very soon spoke with Arinbjorn about those claims on money that he thought he had there in the land.

Arinbjorn said, 'That matter seems to me unpromising. Bergonund is hard, ill to deal with, unjust, covetous ; and he has now much support from the king and the queen. Gunnhilda is your bitter enemy, as you know already, and she will not desire Onund to put the case right.'

Egil said, 'The king will let us get law and justice in this matter, and with your help it seems no great thing in my eyes to take the law of Bergonund.'

They resolved on this, that Egil should equip a swift cutter, whereon they embarked some twenty men, and went south to Hordaland and on to Askr. There they go to the house and find Onund. Egil declares his business, and demands of Onund a sharing of the heritage of Bjorn. He says that Bjorn's daughters were by law both alike his heirs, 'Though methinks,' says Egil, 'Asgerdr will be deemed more nobly born than your wife Gunnhilda.'

Then says Onund in high-pitched voice, 'A wondrous bold man are you, Egil, the outlaw of king Eric, who come hither to his land and think here to attack his men and

friends. You are to know, Egil, that I have overthrown men as good as you for less cause than methinks this is, when you claim heritage in right of your wife; for this is well known to all, that she is born of a bondwoman.'

Onund was furious in language for a time; but when Egil saw that Onund would do no right in this matter, then he summoned him to court, and referred the matter to the law of the Gula-thing.

Onund said, 'To the Gula-thing I will come, and my will is that you should not come away thence with a whole skin.'

Egil said he would risk coming to the Thing all the same: 'There let come what come may to end our matter.'

Egil then went away with his company, and when he came home told Arinbjorn of his journey and of Onund's answer. Arinbjorn was very angry that Thora his father's sister had been called a bondwoman. Arinbjorn went to king Eric, and declared this matter before him.

The king took his words rather sullenly, and said that Arinbjorn had long advocated Egil's cause: 'He has had this grace through thee, that I have let him be here in the land; but now shall I think it too much to bear if thou back him in his assaults on my friends.'

Arinbjorn said, 'Thou wilt let us get law in this case.'

The king was rather peevish in this talk, but Arinbjorn could see that the queen was much worse-willed.

Arinbjorn went back and said that things looked rather unpromising. The winter wore away, and the time came when men should go to the Gula-thing. Arinbjorn took to the Thing a numerous company, among them went Egil.



CHAPTER LVII.

Suit between Egil and Onund.

KING ERIC was there numerously attended. Bergonund was among his train, as were his brothers; there was a large following. But when the meeting was to be held about men's lawsuits, both the parties went where the court was set, to plead their proofs. Then was

Onund full of big words. Now where the court sate was a level plot, with hazel-poles planted in a ring, and outside were twisted ropes all around. This was called 'the precincts.' Within the ring sate twelve judges of the Firth-folk, twelve of the Sogn-folk, twelve of the Horda-folk. These three twelves were to judge all the suits. Arinbjorn ruled who should be judges from the Firth-folk, Thord of Aurland who should be so from the Sogn-folk. All these were of one party. Arinbjorn had brought thither a long-ship fully equipt, also many small craft and store-ships. King Eric had six or seven long-ships all well equipt; a great number of land-owners were also there.

Egil began his cause thus: he craved the judges to give him lawful judgment in the suit between him and Onund. He then set forth what proofs he held of his claim on the property that had belonged to Bjorn Brynjolf's son. He said that Asgerdr daughter of Bjorn, own wife of him Egil, was rightful heiress, born noble, of landed gentry, even of titled family further back. And he craved of the judges this, to adjudge to Asgerdr half of Bjorn's inheritance, whether land or chattels.

And when he ceased speaking, then Bergonund took the word and spoke thus: 'Gunnhilda my wife is the daughter of Bjorn and Alof, the wife whom Bjorn lawfully married. Gunnhilda is rightful heiress of Bjorn. I for this reason took possession of all the property left by Bjorn, because I knew that that other daughter of Bjorn had no right to inherit. Her mother was a captive of war, afterwards taken as concubine, without her kinsmen's consent, and carried from land to land. But thou, Egil, thinkest to go on here, as everywhere else, with thy fierceness and wrongful dealing. This will not avail thee now; for king Eric and queen Gunnhilda have promised me that I shall have right in every cause within the bounds of their dominion. I will produce true evidence before the king and the judges that Thora Lace-hand, Asgerdr's mother, was taken captive from the house of Thorir her brother, and a second time from Brynjolf's house at Aurland. Then she went away out of the land with freebooters, and was outlawed from Norway, and in this outlawry Bjorn and she had born to them this

girl Asgerdr. A great wonder now is this in Egil, that he thinks to make void all the words of king Eric. First, Egil, thou art here in the land after Eric made thee an outlaw ; secondly—which is worse—though thou hast a bond-woman to thy wife, thou claimest for her right of heritage. I demand this of the judges, that they adjudge the inheritance to Gunnhilda, but adjudge Asgerdr to be the bond-woman of the king, because she was begotten when her father and mother were outlawed by the king.'

Right wroth was Arinbjorn when he heard Thora Lace-hand called a bondwoman ; and he stood up, and would no longer hold his peace, but looked around on either side, and took the word :

'Evidence we will bring, sir king, in this matter, and oaths we will add, that this was in the reconciliation of my father and Bjorn Yeoman expressly provided, that Asgerdr daughter of Bjorn and Thora was to have right of inheriting after Bjorn her father ; as also this, which thyself, O king, dost know, that thou restoredst Bjorn to his rights in Norway, and so everything was settled which had before stood in the way of their reconciliation.'

To these words the king found no ready answer. Then sang Egil a stave :

'Bondwoman born this knave
My brooch-decked lady calls.
Shameless in selfish greed
Such dealing Onund loves :
Braggart ! my bride is one
Born heiress, jewell'd dame.
Our oaths, great king, accept,
Oaths that are meet and true.'

Then Arinbjorn produced witnesses, twelve men, and all well chosen. These all had heard, being present, the reconciliation of Thorir and Bjorn, and they offered to the king and judges to swear to it. The judges were willing to accept their oath if the king forbade it not.

Then did queen Gunnhilda take the word :

'Great wonder is this, sir king, that thou lettest this big Egil make such a coil of the whole cause before thee. Wouldst thou find nought to say against him, though he should claim at thy hand thy very kingdom ? Now though

thou wilt give no decision that may help Onund, yet will not I brook this, that Egil tread under foot our friends and wrongfully take the property from Onund. Where is Alf my brother? Go thou, Alf, with thy following, where the judges are, and let them not give this wrong judgment.'

Then he and his men went thither, and cut in sunder the precinct-ropes and tore down the poles, and scattered the judges. Great uproar was there in the Thing; but men there were all weaponless.

Then spake Egil: 'Can Bergonund hear my words?'

'I hear,' said Onund.

'Then do I challenge thee to combat, and be our fight here at the Thing. Let him of us twain have this property, both lands and chattels, who wins the victory. But be thou every man's dastard if thou darest not.'

Whereupon king Eric made answer: 'If thou, Egil, art strongly set on fighting, then will we grant thee this forthwith.'

Egil replied: 'I will not fight with king's power and overwhelming force; but before equal numbers I will not flee, if this be given me. Nor will I then make any distinction of persons, titled or untitled.'

Then spake Arinbjorn: 'Go we away, Egil; we shall not here effect to-day anything that will be to our gain.'

And with this Arinbjorn and all his people turned to depart.

But Egil turned him and cried aloud: 'This do I protest before thee, Arinbjorn, and thee, Thord, and all men that now can hear my word, barons and lawmen and all people, that I ban all those lands that belonged to Bjorn Brynjolfsson, from building and tillage, and from all gain therefrom to be gotten. I ban them to thee, Bergonund, and to all others, natives and foreigners, high and low; and anyone who shall herein offend I denounce as a law-breaker, a peace breaker, and accursed.'

After which Egil went away with Arinbjorn.

They then went to their ships; and there was a rise in the ground of some extent to pass over, so that the ships were not visible from the Thing-field. Egil was very wroth. And when they came to the ships, Arinbjorn spoke before his people and said:

‘ All men know what has been the issue of the Thing here, that we have not got law ; but the king is much in wrath, so that I expect our men will get hard measure from him if he can bring it about. I will now that every man embark on his ship and go home. Let none wait for other.’

Then Arinbjorn went on board his own ship, and to Egil he said : Now go you with your comrades on board the cutter that lies here outside the long-ship, and get you away at once. Travel by night so much as you may, and not by day, and be on your guard, for the king will seek to meet with you. Come and find me afterwards, when all this is ended, whatever may have chanced between you and the king.’

Egil did as Arinbjorn said ; they went aboard the cutter, about thirty men, and rowed with all their might. The vessel was remarkably fast. Then rowed out of the haven many other ships of Arinbjorn’s people, cutters and row-boats ; but the long-ship which Arinbjorn steered went last, for it was the heaviest under oars. Egil’s cutter, which he steered, soon outstripped the rest. Then Egil sang a stave :

‘ My heritage he steals,
The money-grasping heir
Of Thornfoot. But his threats,
Though fierce, I boldly meet.
For land we sought the law :
Land-grabbing loon is he !
But robbery of my right
Ere long he shall repay.’



CHAPTER LVIII.

Of king Eric and Egil.

KING ERIC heard the concluding words of Egil that he spake last at the Thing, and his wrath waxed hot. But all men had gone weaponless to the Thing, therefore the king attempted no attack. He bade his men hasten to their ships, and they did as he bade. Then, when they came to the strand, the king summoned his household Thing, and told them his purpose.

'We must now,' said he, 'untent our ships and row after Arinbjorn and Egil, and this I will have you know, that we will take Egil's life if we get the chance, and spare no man who shall stand up for him.'

After that they went aboard, made all ready as speedily as might be, and pushed out the ships and rowed to the place where Arinbjorn's ships had been. These were now all gone. Then the king bade that they should row after them northwards by the sound. And when he came to Sogn-sea, then there was Arinbjorn's company rowing in towards Sheep-ing-sound, and thither the king turned in after them, and he came up with Arinbjorn's ship in the inner part of Sheep-ing-sound. At once the king made for it, and they exchanged words. The king asked whether Egil was in the ship. Arinbjorn answered.

'Egil is not here,' he said; 'that, O king, thou mayest at once see. Here on board are none but those whom thou knowest; and Egil will not be found down under the benches, though thou shouldst seek him there.'

The king asked Arinbjorn what he knew latest of Egil. He said that Egil was on a cutter with thirty men, and they took their way out to Stone-sound. Then the king told his men to row by the inner sound, and shape their course so as to meet Egil.

There was a man named Kettle Hod; he was of king Eric's guard, an Uplander by family. He was pilot on the king's ship, and steered the same. Kettle was a tall man and a handsome; he was near of kin to the king. And 'twas generally said that he and the king were like in appearance.

Now Egil, before going to the Thing, had had his ship launched and the cargo put on board. And after parting with Arinbjorn he and his went their way to Stone-sound, till they came to his ship, which lay there afloat in the haven with tent overspread. Then they went up aboard the ship, but the cutter rode beside the rudder of the ship between the land and the ship, and the oars lay there in the loops.

Next morning, when day had hardly dawned, the watch were aware that some ships were rowing for them. But when Egil saw that it was an enemy, he stood up and bade that they should leap into the cutter. He armed himself

at once, as did they all. Egil took up those chests of silver which King Athelstan gave him, and bore them with him. They leapt armed into the cutter, and rowed forward between the land and the long-ship that was advancing nearest to the land ; this was king Eric's ship. But, as it happened suddenly and there was little light, the two ships ran past each other. And when the stern-castles were opposite, then Egil hurled a spear and smote in the middle the man who sat steering, Kettle Hod to wit, and at once he got his bane. Then king Eric called out and bade men row after Egil and his party, but as their vessels ran past Egil's merchant-ship, the king's men leapt aboard of that. And those of Egil's men who had been left behind, and not leapt into the cutter, were all slain who could be caught, but some escaped to land. Ten men of Egil's followers were lost there.

Some ships rowed after Egil, but some plundered the merchant-ship. All the booty on board was taken, and the ship burnt. But those who rowed after Egil pulled hard ; two at each oar, and they could even so take the rowing by turns. For they had no lack of men on board, while Egil's crew was short, they being now but eighteen on the cutter. So the distance between them lessened. But inside of the island was a shallow sound between it and other islands. It was now low water. Egil and his rowers ran their cutter into that shallow sound, but the long-ships could not float there ; thus pursuers and pursued were parted. The king then turned back southwards, but Egil went north to seek Arinbjorn. Then sang Egil a stave :

‘ Wakener of weapon-din,
The warlike prince, hath wrought
(Where I escaped scot-free)
Scathe on our gallant ten.
Yet sped my hand a spear,
Like springing salmon swift,
That rushed and Kettle's ribs
Rent sore with deathful wound.’

Egil came to Arinbjorn, and told him these tidings. Arinbjorn said that he could expect nothing better in dealing with king Eric. ‘ But you shall not want for money, Egil. I will make good the loss of your ship, and

give you another, in which you can well sail to Iceland.' Asgerdr, Egil's wife, had remained at Arinbjorn's while they went to the Thing. Arinbjorn gave Egil a good seaworthy ship, and had it laden with such things as Egil wished. This ship Egil got ready for sea, and again he had a crew of about thirty men. Then he and Arinbjorn parted in friendship. And Egil sang :

‘Requite him, righteous gods,
For robbery of my wealth !
Hunt him away, be wroth,
High Odin, heavenly powers !
Foe of his folk, base king,
May Frey and Njord make flee !
Hate him, land-guardians, hate,
Who holy ground hath scorn'd !’



CHAPTER LIX.

King Eric slays his brothers.

HAROLD FAIRHAIR set his sons to rule in Norway when he began to grow old : Eric he made king above all his other sons. It was when Harold had been king for seventy years that he gave over the kingdom into the hands of his son Eric. At that time Gunnhilda bare a son, whom Harold the king sprinkled with water, giving him his own name ; and he added this that he should be king after his father if he lived long enough. King Harold then settled down in retirement, being mostly in Rogaland or Hordaland. But three years later king Harold died in Rogaland, and a mound was raised to his memory by Haugasound.

After the death of the king there was great strife between his sons, for the men of Vik took Olaf for their king, but the Thronds Sigurd. But these two, his brothers, Eric slew at Tunsberg, one year after King Harold's death. All these things happened in one and the same summer, to wit, king Eric's going with his army eastwards to Vik to fight with his brothers, and (before that) the strife of Egil and Bergonund at the Gula-thing, with the other events that have just been related.

Bergonund remained at home on his estate when the

king went to the war, for he thought it unsafe for him to leave home while Egil was still in the land. Hadd, his brother, was now there with him. There was a man named Frodi, a kinsman of king Eric, very handsome, young in years, but a man grown. King Eric left him behind to protect Bergonund. Frodi was staying at Alrekstead, a royal farm, and had some men there. A son of Eric and Gunnhilda there was named Rognvald, who was then ten or eleven years old, and had the makings of a very handsome man. He was with Frodi when these things happened. But before king Eric rowed forth to this war, he made Egil an outlaw through all Norway, and free for any man to slay. Arinbjorn was with the king in the war ; but before he left home Egil took his ship to sea, and made for the outlying fishing station called Vitar, over against Aldi. It is on the high road of the seas : fishermen were there, and 'twas a good place for hearing tidings. Then he heard that the king had made him an outlaw. Whereupon Egil sang a stave :

‘ Law-breaker, land-demon,
Long voyage lays on me ;
He bane of his brothers,
Beguiled by his bride.
Gunnhilda the guilt bears
(Grim queen) of my exile :
Fain am I full swiftly
Her frauds to repay.’

The weather was calm, a fell-wind blew by night, a sea-breeze by day. One evening Egil sailed out to sea, but the fishermen were then rowing in to land, those, to wit, who had been set as spies on Egil's movements. They had this to tell, that Egil had put out and sailed to sea, and was gone. This news they carried to Bergonund. And when he knew these tidings, then he sent away all those men that he had had before for protection. Thereafter he rowed in to Alrekstead, and bade Frodi to his house, for he had a great ale-drinking there. Frodi went with him, taking some men. They were feasted well there, and they made merry, with no fear of danger. Rognvald, the king's son, had a pinnace, rowed by six men on either side, painted all above the sea line. He had with him ten or twelve who con-

stantly followed him ; and when Frodi had left home, then Rognvald took the pinnace and they rowed out to Herdla twelve in number. A large farm of the king's was there, whereof the manager was named Skegg-Thorir. Rognvald in his childhood had been fostered there. Thorir received the king's son joyfully. There too was no lack of drink.



CHAPTER LX.

The slaying of Bergonund and Rognvald the king's son.

EGIL sailed out to sea for the night, as was written above. And when morning came the wind fell and there was a calm. They then lay drifting, letting the ship ride free for some nights. But when a sea-breeze came on, Egil said to his shipmen, 'We will now sail to land, for I do not quite know, should the sea-wind come to blow hard, where we could make land, 'tis a dangerous-looking coast in most places.' The rowers bade Egil rule their course.

So then they made sail, and sailed into the waters about Herdla. There they found a good haven, and spread the tent over their ship, and lay there for the night. They had on the ship a little boat, into which went Egil with three men. They rowed into Herdla, and sent a man up into the island to learn tidings ; and when he came down to the ship, he said that there at the farm was Rognvald, the king's son, and his men. 'They sate there a-drinking,' said he. 'I lit on one of the house-carles ; he was ale-mad, and said that here they must not drink less than was drunk at Bergonund's, though Frodi was feasting there with a party of five. He said that no more were there than the household, save Frodi and his men.'

Whereupon Egil rowed back to the ship, and bade the men rise and take their weapons. They did so. The ship they put out from the shore and anchored. Egil left twelve men to guard the ship, but himself went on the ship's boat, they being eighteen in all ; they then rowed in along the sound. They so regulated their pace that they came to

Fenhring at eventide, and put into a hidden creek there. Then said Egil : 'Now will I go up into the island and spy out what I can get to know ; but you shall await me here.'

Egil had his weapons that he was wont to have, a helm and shield, a sword at his girdle, a halberd in his hand. He went up into the island and along the border of a wood. He had now drawn a hood over his helm. He came where there were some lads, and with them large sheepdogs. And when they began to exchange words, he asked whence they were, and why they were there, and had such big dogs. They said : 'You must be a very silly fellow ; have you not heard that a bear goes about the island here, a great pest ? He kills both men and sheep, and a price is set upon his head. We watch here at Askr every night over our flocks that are penned in the fold. But why go you at night thus armed ?'

He answered : 'I, too, am afraid of the bear ; and few, methinks, now go weaponless. He has long pursued me to-night. See there now, where he is in the skirt of the wood ! Are all asleep at this farmhouse ?'

The boy said that Bergonund and Frodi would be drinking still ; 'they sit at it every night.'

'Then tell them,' said Egil, 'where the bear is ; but I will hasten home.'

So he went away ; but the boy ran home to the farmhouse, and into the room where they were drinking. All had gone to sleep save these three, Onund, Frodi, and Hadd. The boy told them where the bear was. They took their weapons which hung there by them, and at once ran out and up to the wood.

From the main forest ran out a spur of wood with scattered bushes. The boy told them where the bear had been in the bushes. Then they saw that the branches moved, whence they guessed that the bear would be there. Then Bergonund advised that Hadd and Frodi should run forward between the shrubs and the main forest, and stop the bear from gaining the wood. Bergonund ran forward to the bushes. He had helm and shield, a sword at his girdle, a halberd in his hand. Egil was there before him in the bushes, but no bear.

And when he saw where Bergonund was, he unsheathed

his sword, and, taking the coil of cord attached to the hilt, wound it round his arm, and so let the sword hang. In his hand he grasped his halberd, and then ran forward to meet Bergonund. Which when Bergonund saw, he quickened his pace and cast his shield before him, and ere they met each hurled his halberd at the other.

Egil opposed the halberd with shield held aslant, so that the halberd with a cut tore out of the shield and flew into the ground. But Egil's weapon came full on the middle of the shield, and went right through it far up the blade, and the weapon was fast in the shield. Onund's shield was thus cumbersome. Then quickly did Egil grasp his sword-hilt. Onund also began to draw his sword; but ere it was half drawn Egil pierced him with a thrust. Onund reeled at the blow; but Egil suddenly snatched back his sword, and made a cut at Onund, well-nigh taking off his head. Then Egil took his halberd out of the shield.

Now Hadd and Frodi saw Bergonund's fall, and ran thither. Egil turned to meet them. At Frodi he threw his halberd, which, piercing the shield, went into his breast and out at his back. At once he fell back dead. Then, taking his sword, Egil turned against Hadd, and they exchanged but few blows ere Hadd fell. Just then the herd-boys chanced to come up. Egil said to them: 'Watch you here by Onund your master and his friends, that no beast or bird tear their bodies.'

Egil then went his way, and before long eleven of his comrades met him, six staying to watch the ship. They asked him what success he had had. Whereupon he sang:

‘ Long did we losers sit,
Losers through him who took
With greed the gold that once
To guard I better knew :
Till now Bergonund's bane
My blade with wounds hath wrought,
And hidden earth in veil
Of Hadd's and Frodi's blood.’

Then Egil said: 'We will now turn back to the farm, and act in warlike-wise, slaying all the men we can, and taking all the booty we can come by.'

They went to the farm, rushed into the house, and slew

there fifteen or sixteen men. Some escaped by running away. They plundered the place, destroying what they could not take with them. The cattle they drove to the shore and slaughtered, putting on board as much as the boat would hold; then they rowed out by the sound between the islands. Egil was now furious, so that there was no speaking with him. He sat at the boat's helm.

And when they got further out in the firth towards Herdla, then came rowing out towards them Rognvald the king's son with twelve more on the painted pinnace. They had now learnt that Egil's ship lay in Herdla-water, and they meant to take to Onund news of Egil's whereabouts. And when Egil saw the boat, he knew it at once. Straight for it he steered; and when the boats came together, the beak of the cutter struck the side of the pinnace's bow, which so heeled over that the water poured in on one side and the boat filled. Egil leapt aboard, grasping his halberd, and cried to his men to let no one in the pinnace escape with life. This was easy, for there was no defence. All were slain as they swam, none escaped. Thirteen there perished, Rognvald and his comrades. Then Egil and his men rowed to Herdla-island, and Egil sang a stave:

‘I fought, nor feared vengeance;
Falchion there reddened
Blood of son of Bloodaxe,
Bold king, and his queen.
Perish'd on one pinnace
Prince with twelve his liege-men,
Such stress of stern battle
Against them I stirred.’

And when Egil and his men came to Herdla, at once fully armed they ran up to the farm buildings. But when Thorir and his household saw that, they at once ran away and saved themselves, all that could go, men and women. Egil's party plundered the place of all they could lay hands on; then they rowed out to their ship. Nor had they long to wait ere a breeze blew off the land. They made ready to sail.

And when all was ready for sailing, Egil went up into the island. He took in his hand a hazel-pole, and went to a rocky eminence that looked inward to the mainland. Then he took a horse's head and fixed it on the pole. After that,

in solemn form of curse, he thus spake : 'Here set I up a curse-pole, and this curse I turn on king Eric and queen Gunnhilda. (Here he turned the horse's head landwards.) This curse I turn also on the guardian-spirits who dwell in this land, that they may all wander astray, nor reach or find their home till they have driven out of the land king Eric and Gunnhilda.'

This spoken, he planted the pole down in a rift of the rock, and let it stand there. The horse's head he turned inwards to the mainland ; but on the pole he cut runes, expressing the whole form of curse.

After this Egil went aboard the ship. They made sail, and sailed out to sea. Soon the breeze freshened, and blew strong from a good quarter ; so the ship ran on apace. Then sang Egil :

'Forest-foe, fiercely blowing,
Flogs hard and unceasing
With sharp storm the sea-way
That ship's stern doth plow.
The wind, willow-render,
With icy gust ruthless
Our sea-swan doth buffet
O'er bowsprit and beak.'

Their voyage sped well ; from the main they came into Borgar-firth, brought their ship into the haven, carried their baggage on shore. Egil then went home to Borg ; but his crew found them lodging. Skallagrim was now old and weak with age. Egil took the management of the property and care of the house.



CHAPTER LXI.

Death of Skallagrim.

THREE was a man named Thorgeir. He had to wife Thordis Yngvar's daughter, Egil's mother's sister.

Thorgeir dwelt on Swan-ness at Lambstead. He had come out to Iceland with Yngvar. He was wealthy and much honoured of men. Thorgeir and his wife had a son Thord, who was dwelling at Lambstead after his father, when Egil now came back to Iceland.

It chanced in the autumn, shortly before winter, that Thord rode in to Borg to find Egil his kinsman ; and he bade him to a banquet. He had had ale brewed out at his home. Egil promised to go, and a day was fixed about a week thence. So when the time came, Egil prepared to go, and with him Asgerdr his wife ; they were a company of ten or twelve in all.

But just when Egil was ready, Skallagrim went out with him, and embracing him before he mounted said : ' You are late, methinks, Egil, in paying to me that money which king Athelstan sent me. What do you mean to do with that money ? '

Egil answered, ' Are you very short of money, father ? I did not know it. I shall at once let you have silver, when I know you need it ; but I know that you still have in your keeping one or two chests full of silver. '

' I suppose,' said Skallagrim, ' you think that we have made our division of the movable property. You must now be content if I do what I like with what money I have in keeping. '

Egil answered : ' You cannot think you need to ask any leave from me in this ; for you will choose to have it your own way, whatever I may say. '

Then Egil rode away till he came to Lambstead, where he was made heartily welcome ; he was to be there three nights. That same evening that Egil left home, Skallagrim had a horse saddled. He then rode out just when others were going to bed. When he went away, he bore before him on his knees a very large chest ; but under his arm he carried a brazen kettle. It has been since held for certain that he let down one or both into Krum's bog-hole, and dropped a large stone slab atop of them. Skallagrim came home about midnight, and then went to his place and lay down in his clothes. But in the morning, when it was light and people were dressed, there sat Skallagrim forward on the seat's edge, already dead, and so stiff that they could not straighten him nor move him, though they tried all they could.

Then a man was put on horseback, who galloped off as hard as he might to Lambstead. At once he sought Egil, and told him these tidings. Then Egil took his weapons

and clothes and rode home, reaching Borg by eventide. And at once on dismounting he went in, and to the passage that was round the hall, with doors leading from the passage to the seats inside. Egil went on to the chief seat, and took Skallagrim by the shoulders, and forced him backwards, and laid him down in the seat, and rendered then the services to the dead. Then Egil bade them take digging tools and break open the wall on the south side. When this was done, then Egil supported the head and others the feet of Skallagrim ; and so they bore him athwart the house out through the breach in the wall just made. Then they bore him immediately down to Nausta-ness. There for the night a tent was set over the body ; but in the morning with flood-tide Skallagrim was put on a boaf and rowed out to Digra-ness. There Egil had a mound raised on the point of the ness. Therein was laid Skallagrim, with his horse, his weapons, and his smithy tools. It is not told that any valuables were laid in the mound beside him.

Egil took the heritage, lands and chattels. Thence-forward he ruled the house. With Egil there was Thordis, daughter of Thorolf and Asgerdr.



CHAPTER LXII.

Egil's voyage to England.

King ERIC ruled over Norway one year after the death of his father King Harold, before Hacon Athelstan's foster-son, another son of Harold, came out of the west from England ; and in that same summer Egil Skallagrimsson went to Iceland. Hacon went northwards to Throndheim. He was there accepted as king. He and Eric were for the winter both kings in Norway. But in the following spring each gathered an army. Hacon had by far the larger numbers ; the reason of this was that he made it law in the land that every man should own his patrimony, where king Harold had enslaved all, rich and poor alike. Eric saw no other choice but to flee the land ; so he went abroad with Gunnhilda his wife and their children. Lord Arinbjorn was

king Eric's foster-brother, and foster-father of his son. Dear to the king was he above all his barons ; the king had set him as ruler over all the Firth-folk. Arinbjorn was with the king when he left the land ; they first went westwards over the main to the Orkneys. There Eric gave his daughter Ragnhildr in marriage to earl Arnfinn. After that he went south with his force along the coast of Scotland, and harried there ; thence still south to England, and harried there. And when king Athelstan heard of this, he gathered force and went against Eric. But when they met, terms were proposed, and the terms were that king Athelstan gave to Eric the government of Northumberland ; and he was to be for king Athelstan defender of the land against the Scots and Irish. Athelstan had made Scotland tributary under him after the death of king Olaf, but that people were constantly disloyal to him. The story goes that Gunnhilda had a spell worked, this spell being that Egil Skallagrimsson should find no rest in Iceland till she had seen him. But in that summer when Hacon and Eric had met and contended for Norway, all travel to any land from Norway was forbidden ; so in that summer there came to Iceland from Norway neither ship nor tidings. Egil Skallagrimsson abode at his home.

But during the second winter that he was living at Borg after Skallagrim's death Egil became melancholy, and this was more marked as the winter wore on. And when summer came, Egil let it be known that he meant to make ready his ship for a voyage out in the summer. He then got a crew. He purposed to sail to England. They were thirty men on the ship. Asgerdr remained behind, and took charge of the house. Egil's purpose was to seek king Athelstan and look after the promise that he had made to Egil at their last parting.

It was late ere Egil was ready, and when he put to sea, the winds delayed him. Autumn then came on, and rough weather set in. They sailed past the north coast of the Orkneys. Egil would not put in there, for he thought king Eric's power would be supreme all over the islands. Then they sailed southwards past Scotland, and had great storms

and cross winds. Weathering the Scotch coast they held on southwards along England ; but on the evening of a day, as darkness came on, it blew a gale. Before they were aware, breakers were both seaward and ahead. There was nothing for it but to make for land, and this they did. Under sail they ran ashore, and came to land at Humber-mouth. All the men were saved, and most of the cargo, but as for the ship, that was broken to pieces.

When they found men to speak with, they learnt these tidings, which Egil thought good, that with king Athelstan all was well and with his kingdom : but other tidings were there which Egil thought dangerous, to wit, that king Eric Bloodaxe was there and Gunnhilda, and they had the government of the province, and Eric was but a short way up the country in the town of York. This also Egil learnt, that lord Arinbjorn was there with the king, and in great friendship with him.

And when Egil got to know these tidings, he resolved what to do. He thought he had little hope of escape, though he should try to conceal himself and to go disguised as long as he might till he were clear of Eric's dominions. For he was at that time easily known by such as should see him. He thought also it were a mean man's fate to be captured in such flight. So he took a bold heart, and resolved that at once, in that very night when they came there, he would get him a horse and ride to the town. He came there in the evening, and rode at once into the town. He had now a hood drawn over his helm, and was fully armed.

Egil inquired where in the town Arinbjorn was housed. It was told him. Thither he rode to the house. When he came to the hall-door, he dismounted from his horse, and found a man to speak to. It was told him that Arinbjorn sat at meat.

Egil said : 'I would fain, good fellow, you should go into the hall and ask Arinbjorn whether he will rather speak without or within to Egil Skallagrimsson.'

The man said : 'Tis but little trouble for me to do this errand.'

He went into the hall, and spoke quite loud : 'There is a man come here out before the door,' said he, 'big as a

giant, and he begged me go in and ask whether thou wouldest rather without or within speak to Egil Skallagrimsson.'

Arinbjorn said: 'Go and beg him to bide without, nor shall he need to bide long.'

He did as Arinbjorn told him, went out and said what had been said to him.

Arinbjorn bade take up the tables; then went he out and all his house-carles with him.

And when Arinbjorn met Egil, he greeted him well, and asked why he was come there.

Egil in few words told him clearly of his journey: 'And now you shall see what counsel I ought to take, if you will give me any help.'

'Have you,' said Arinbjorn, 'before you came to this house met any men in the town who are likely to have known you?'

'None,' said Egil.

'Let men then take their weapons,' said Arinbjorn.

They did so. But when all were armed, then went they to the king's house. And when they came to the hall, then Arinbjorn knocked at the door, asking them to open, and saying who was there. The door-keepers at once opened the door. The king was sitting at table.

Arinbjorn then bade that they should go in twelve in number, naming for this Egil and ten others. 'Now shall you, Egil, bring the king your head and clasp his foot, but I will be your spokesman.'

Then they went in. Arinbjorn went before the king and saluted him. The king received him, and asked what he would have.

Arinbjorn said: 'I lead hither one who has come a long way to seek thee in thy place, and to be reconciled to thee. Great is this honour to thee, my lord, when thine enemies travel of their own free will from other lands, and deem they cannot endure thy wrath though thou be nowhere near. Now show thyself princely to this man. Let him get of thee good terms, seeing that he hath so magnified thine honour, as thou now mayst see, by braving many seas and dangers to come hither from his own home. No compulsion drove him to this journey, nought but goodwill to thee.'

Then the king looked round, and saw over men's heads where Egil stood. The king knew him at once, and, darting a keen glance at him, said: 'How wert thou so bold, Egil, that thou daredst to come before me? Thy last parting from me was such that of life thou couldst have from me no hope.'

Then went Egil up to the table, and clasped the foot of the king. He then sang:

With cross-winds far cruising
I came on my wave-horse,
Eric England's warder
Eager soon to see.
Now wielder of wound-flash,
Wight dauntless in daring,
That strong strand of Harold's
Stout lineage I meet.'

King Eric said: 'I need not to count the crimes on thy hands, for they are so many and great that each one might well warrant that thou go not hence alive. Thou hast nothing else to expect but that here thou must die. This thou mightest know before, that thou wouldest get no terms from me.'

Gunnhilda said: 'Why shall not Egil be slain at once? Rememberest thou no more, O king, what Egil hath done to thee—slain thy friends and kin, ay, even thine own son to boot, and cursed thyself? Where ever was it known that a king was thus dealt with?'

Arinbjorn said: 'If Egil have spoken evil of the king, for that he can now atone in words of praise that shall live for all time.'

Gunnhilda said: 'We will hear none of his praise. O king, bid Egil be led out and beheaded. I will neither hear his words nor see him.'

Then said Arinbjorn: 'The king will not let himself be egged on to all thy dastardly work. He will not have Egil slain by night, for night-slaying is murder.'

The king said: 'So shall it be, Arinbjorn, as thou demandest. Egil shall live this night. Take thou him home with thee, and bring him to me in the morning.'

Arinbjorn thanked the king for his words: 'We hope, my lord, that henceforth Egil's cause will take a better turn.'

And though Egil has done great wrong against thee, yet look thou on this, that he has suffered much from thee and thy kin. King Harold thy father took the life of Thorolf, a man of renown, Egil's father's brother, for the slander of bad men, for no crime at all. And thou, O king, didst break the law in Egil's case for the sake of Bergonund; nay further thou didst wish to doom his death, and didst slay his men, and plunder all his goods, and withal didst make him an outlaw and drive him from the land. And Egil is one who will stand no teasing. But in every cause under judgment one must look on the act with its reasons. I will now have Egil in keeping for the night.'

'Then Arinbjorn and Egil went back to the house, and when they came in they two went into a small upper room and talked over this matter. Arinbjorn said: 'The king just now was very wroth, yet methought his mood rather softened before the end, and fortune will now decide what may be the upshot. I know that Gunnhilda will set all her mind on marring your cause. Now I would fain that we take this counsel: that you be awake through the night, and compose a song of praise about king Eric. I should think it had best be a poem of twenty stanzas, and you might recite it to-morrow when we come before the king. Thus did Bragi my kinsman, when he was under the wrath of Bjorn king of Sweden; he composed a poem of praise about him in one night, and for it received his head. Now may we also have the same luck with the king, that you may make your peace with him, if you can offer him the poem of praise.'

Egil said: 'I shall try this counsel that you wish, but 'twas the last thing I ever meant, to sing king Eric's praises.'

Arinbjorn bade him try.

Then Arinbjorn went away, and had food and drink carried to the upper room. Egil was there alone for the night. Arinbjorn went to his men, and they sate over drink till midnight. Then Arinbjorn and his men went to the sleeping chambers, but before undressing he went up to the room to Egil, and asked how he was getting on with the poem.

Egil said that nothing was done. 'Here,' said he, 'has

sate a swallow by the window and twittered all night, so that I have never got rest for that same.'

Whereupon Arinbjorn went away and out by the door leading up to the house-roof, and he sate by the window of the upper room where the bird had before sate. He saw that something of a shape witch-posset moved away from the roof. Arinbjorn sate there by the window all night till dawn. But after Arinbjorn had come there, Egil composed all the poem, and got it so by heart that he could recite it in the morning when he met Arinbjorn. They watched for a fit time to go before the king.



CHAPTER LXIII.

Egil recites the poem.

King ERIC went to table according to his wont, and much people were with him. And when Arinbjorn knew this, then went he with all his followers fully armed to the king's palace while the king sate at table. Arinbjorn craved entrance into the hall ; it was granted. He and Egil went in with half of his followers, but the other half stood without before the door. Arinbjorn saluted the king ; the king received him well. Arinbjorn spoke : 'Here now is come Egil. He has not sought to run away in the night. Now would we fain know, my lord, what his lot is to be. I hope thou wilt let him get good from my words, for I think it a matter of great moment to me that Egil gain terms from thee. I have so acted (as was right) that neither in word nor deed have I spared aught whereby thy honour should be made greater than before. I have also abandoned all my possessions, kinsmen, and friends that I had in Norway, and followed thee when all other barons deserted thee ; and herein do I what is meet, for thou hast often done great good to me.'

Then spoke Gunnhilda : 'Cease, Arinbjorn, nor prate so at length of this. Thou hast done much good to king Eric, and this he hath fully rewarded. Thou owest far more duty to king Eric than to Egil. It is not for thee

to ask that Egil go unpunished hence from king Eric's presence, seeing what crimes he hath wrought.'

Then said Arinbjorn: 'If thou, O king, and thou Gunnhilda, if ye two have resolved that Egil shall here get no terms, then is this the manly course, to give him respite and leave to go for a week, that he may look out for himself; of his own free will any way he came hither to seek you, and therefore hoped for peace. Thereafter, this done, let your dealings together end as they may.'

Gunnhilda said, 'Well can I see by this, Arinbjorn, that thou art more faithful to Egil than to king Eric. If Egil is to ride hence for a week, then will he in this time be come to king Athelstan. But king Eric cannot now hide this from himself, that every king is now stronger than is he, whereas a little while ago it had been deemed incredible that king Eric would not have the will and energy to avenge his wrongs on such an one as Egil.'

Said Arinbjorn: 'No one will call Eric a greater man for slaying a yeoman's son, a foreigner, who has freely come into his power. But if the king wishes to achieve greatness hereby, then will I help him in this, so that these tidings shall be thought more worthy of record; for I and Egil will now back each other, so that we must both be met at once. Thou wilt then, O king, dearly buy the life of Egil, when we be all laid dead on the field, I and my followers. Far other treatment should I have expected of thee, than that thou wouldest prefer seeing me laid dead on the earth to granting me the boon I crave of one man's life.'

Then answered the king: 'A wondrous eager champion art thou, Arinbjorn, in this thy helping of Egil. Loth were I to do thee scathe, if it comes to this; if thou wilt rather give away thine own life than that he be slain. But sufficient are the charges against Egil, whatever I cause to be done with him.'

And when the king had said this, then Egil advanced before him and began the poem, and recited in a loud voice, and at once won silence.

HEAD-RANSOM.

I.

‘ Westward I sailed the wave,
Within me Odin gave
The sea of song I bear
(So ‘tis my wont to fare) :
I launched my floating oak
When loosening ice-floes broke,
My mind a galleon fraught
With load of minstrel thought.

2.

‘ A prince doth hold me guest,
Praise be his due confess’d :
Of Odin’s mead let draught
In England now be quaff’d.
Laud bear I to the king,
Loudly his honour sing ;
Silence I crave around,
My song of praise is found.

3.

‘ Sire, mark the tale I tell,
Such heed beseems thee well ;
Better I chaunt my strain,
If stillness hush’d I gain.
The monarch’s wars in word
Widely have peoples heard,
But Odin saw alone
Bodies before him strown.

4.

‘ Swell’d of swords the sound
Smiting bucklers round,
Fiercely waxed the fray,
Forward the king made way.
Struck the ear (while blood
Streamed from glaives in flood)
Iron hailstorm’s song,
Heavy, loud and long.

5.

‘ Lances, a woven fence,
Well-ordered bristle dense ;
On royal ships in line
Exulting spearmen shine.
Soon dark with bloody stain
Seethed there an angry main,
With war-fleet’s thundering sound,
With wounds and din around.

6.

‘ Of men many a rank
Mid showering darts sank :
Glory and fame
Gat Eric’s name.

7.

‘ More may yet be told,
An men silence hold :
Further feats and glory,
Fame hath noised in story.
Warriors’ wounds were rife,
Where the chief waged strife,
Shivered swords with stroke
On blue shield-rims broke.

8.

‘ Breast-plates ringing crashed,
Burning helm-fire flashed,
Biting point of glaive
Bloody wound did grave.
Odin’s oaks (they say)
In that iron-play
Baldric’s crystal blade
Bowed and prostrate laid.

9.

‘ Spears crossing dashed,
Sword-edges clashed :
Glory and fame
Gat Eric’s name.

10.

‘ Red blade the king did wield,
Ravens flocked o’er the field.
Dripping spears flew madly,
Darts with aim full deadly.
Scotland’s scourge let feed
Wolf, the Ogress’ steed :
For erne of downtrod dead
Dainty meal was spread.

11.

‘ Soared battle-cranes
O’er corse-strown lanes,
Found flesh-fowl’s bill
Of blood its fill.
While deep the wound
He delves, around
Grim raven’s beak
Blood-fountains break.

12.

' Axe furnished feast
For Ogress' beast :
Eric on the wave
To wolves flesh-banquet gave.

13.

' Javelins flying sped,
Peace affrighted fled ;
Bows were bent amain,
Wolves were battle-fain :
Spears in shivers split,
Sword-teeth keenly bit ;
Archers' strings loud sang,
Arrows forward sprang.

14.

' He back his buckler flings
From arm beset with rings,
Sword-play-stirrer good,
Spiller of foemen's blood.
Waxing everywhere
(Witness true I bear),
East o'er billows came
Eric's sounding name.

15.

' Bent the king his yew,
Bees wound-bearing flew :
Eric on the wave
To wolves flesh-banquet gave.

16.

' Yet to make more plain
I to men were fain
High-soul'd mood of king,
But must swiftly sing.
Weapons when he takes,
The battle-goddess wakes,
On ships' shielded side
Streams the battle-tide.

17.

' Gems from wrist he gives,
Glittering armlets rives :
Lavish ring-despiser
Loves not hoarding miser.
Frodi's flour of gold
Gladdens rovers bold ;
Prince bestoweth scorning
Pebbles hand-adorning.

18.

' Foemen might not stand
For his deathful brand ;
Yew-bow loudly sang,
Sword-blades meeting rang.
Lances aye were cast,
Still he the land held fast,
Proud Eric prince renowned ;
And praise his feats hath crowned.

19.

' Monarch, at thy will
Judge my minstrel skill :
Silence thus to find
Sweetly cheered my mind.
Moved my mouth with word
From my heart's ground stirred,
Draught of Odin's wave
Due to warrior brave.

20.

' Silence I have broken,
A sovereign's glory spoken :
Words I knew well-fitting
Warrior-council sitting.
Praise from heart I bring,
Praise to honoured king :
Plain I sang and clear
Song that all could hear.'



CHAPTER LXIV.

Egil's life is given him.

KING ERIC sate upright while Egil recited the poem, and looked keenly at him. And when the song of praise was ended, then spake the king : ' Right well was the poem recited ; and now, Arinbjorn, I have resolved

about the cause between me and Egil, how it shall go. Thou hast pleaded Egil's cause with great eagerness, since thou offerest to risk a conflict with me. Now shall I for thy sake do what thou hast asked, letting Egil go from my land safe and unhurt. But thou, Egil, so order thy goings that, after leaving my presence and this hall, thou never come before my eyes, nor my sons' eyes, nor be ever in the way of myself or my people. But I give thee now thy head this time for this reason, that thou camest freely into my power. I will do no dastardly deed on thee; yet know thou this for sure, that this is no reconciliation with me or my sons or any of our kin who wish to wreak their vengeance.

Then sang Egil :

‘ Loth am I in nowise,
Though in features loathly,
Helm-capt head in pardon
From high king to take.
Who can boast that ever
Better gift he won him,
From a lordly sovereign's
Noble-minded son ? ’

Arinbjorn thanked the king with many fair words for the honour and friendship that he had shown him. Then they two, Arinbjorn and Egil, went back to Arinbjorn's house. After that Arinbjorn bade horses be made ready for his people. He rode away with Egil, and a hundred fully armed men with him. Arinbjorn rode with that force till they came to king Athelstan, where they were well received. The king asked Egil to remain with him, and inquired how it had gone between him and king Eric. Whereupon Egil sang :

‘ Egil his eyes black-browed
From Eric, raven's friend,
Welcomed. Wise help herein
Wife's loyal kin lent.
My head, throne of helmet,
An heritage noble,
As erst, from rough rainstorm
To rescue I knew.’

But at the parting of Arinbjorn and Egil, Egil gave Arinbjorn those two gold rings that king Athelstan had given him, whereof each weighed a mark. And Arinbjorn

gave Egil the sword called Dragvandill. This had been given to Arinbjorn by Thorolf Skallagrimsson; but before that Skallagrim had received it from Thorolf his brother; but to Thorolf the sword was given by Grim Shaggy-skin, son of Kettle Hæing. Kettle Hæing had owned the sword and used it in his single combats, and no sword was there more biting. Egil and Arinbjorn parted with much affection. Arinbjorn went home to king Eric at York; but Egil's comrades and shipmates had good peace there, and disposed of their cargo under Arinbjorn's protection. But as winter wore on they moved south to England and joined Egil.



CHAPTER LXV.

Egil goes to Norway.

THREE was a baron in Norway named Eric Allwise. He married Thora, daughter of lord Thorir, sister of Arinbjorn. He owned property eastwards in Vik. He was a very wealthy man, much honoured, of prophetic foresight. Son of Eric and Thora was Thorstein; he was brought up with Arinbjorn, and was now fully grown, though quite young. He had gone westwards to England with Arinbjorn.

But in that same autumn when Egil had come to England these tidings were heard from Norway, that Eric Allwise was dead, but the king's stewards had taken his inheritance, and claimed it for the king. These tidings when Arinbjorn and Thorstein heard, they resolved that Thorstein should go east and see after the inheritance.

So when spring came on and men made ready their ships who meant to travel from land to land, then Thorstein went south to London, and there found king Athelstan. He produced tokens and a message from Arinbjorn to the king and also to Egil, that he might be his advocate with the king, so that king Athelstan might send a message from himself to king Hacon, his foster-son, advising that Thorstein should get his inheritance and possessions in Norway. King Athelstan was easily persuaded to this, because Arinbjorn was known to him for good.

Then came Egil also to speak with king Athelstan, and told him his intention.

'I wish this summer,' said he, 'to go eastwards to Norway and see after that property of which king Eric and Bergonund robbed me. Atli the Short, Bergonund's brother, is now in possession. I know that, if a message of yours be added, I shall get law in this matter.'

The king said that Egil should rule his own goings, 'But best, methinks, were it,' he said, 'for thee to be with me and be made defender of my land and command my army. I will promote thee to great honour.'

Egil answered: 'This offer I deem most desirable to take. I will say yea to it and not nay. Yet have I first to go to Iceland, and see after my wife and the property that I have there.'

King Athelstan gave then to Egil a good merchant-ship and a cargo therewith; there was aboard for lading wheat and honey, and much money's worth in other wares. And when Egil made ready his ship for sea, then Thorstein Eric's son settled to go with him, he of whom mention was made before, who was afterwards called Thora's son. And when they were ready they sailed, king Athelstan and Egil parting with much friendship.

Egil and his company had a prosperous voyage; they came to Norway eastwards in Vik, and sailed their ship right into Osloar-firth. Up on land there Thorstein had estates, and also inwards as far as Raumarik. And when Thorstein landed there, he then preferred his claim to his father's property before the stewards who were settled on his farm. Many lent help to Thorstein in this matter: a meeting was held about it: Thorstein had there many kinsmen of renown. The end was that it was referred to the king's decision, Thorstein meanwhile taking to him the safe-keeping of his father's possessions.

For winter lodgment Egil went to Thorstein's with eleven more. Thither to Thorstein's house was moved the wheat and honey; a merry time of it they had that winter. Thorstein kept house in grand style, for provisions were in plenty.

CHAPTER LXVI.

Egil and Thorstein go before the king.

King HACON Athelstan's foster-son then ruled Norway, as was told before. That winter the king held court in the north in Throndheim. But as the winter wore on, Thorstein started on his journey and Egil with him, and they had about thirty men. When ready they first went to Upland, thence northwards by the Dovrefell to Throndheim, where they came before king Hacon. They declared their errand with the king. Thorstein explained his cause, and produced witnesses that he was rightful owner of all that inheritance which he claimed. The king received this matter well, and let Thorstein obtain his possessions, and therewith he was made a baron of the king even as his father had been.

Egil also went before king Hacon and declared his errand, giving therewith king Athelstan's message and tokens. Egil claimed property that had belonged to Bjorn Yeoman, lands and chattels. Half of this property he claimed for himself and Asgerdr his wife, and he offered witness and oaths to his cause. He said, too, that he had set all this before king Eric, adding that he had then not got law, owing to king Eric's power and the prompting of Gunnhilda. Egil set forth the whole cause which had been tried at the Gula-thing. He then begged the king to grant him law in this matter.

King Hacon answered: 'This have I heard, that my brother Eric and with him Gunnhilda both assert that thou, Egil, hast cast a stone beyond thy strength in thy dealings with them. Now, methinks, though I and Eric have not the luck to agree, yet thou mightest be well content should I do nothing in this cause.'

Egil said: 'Thou mayest not, O king, be silent about causes so great, for all men here in the land, natives or foreigners, must hearken to thy bidding or banning. I have heard that thou establishest here in the land law and right for everyone. Now I know that thou wilt let me get these even as other men. Methinks I am of birth and have

strength of kinsfolk enough here in the land to win right against Atli the Short. But as for the cause between me and king Eric, there is this to say to thee, that I went before him, and that we so parted that he bade me go in peace whither I would. I will offer thee, my lord, my following and service. I know that there will be here with thee men who can in no wise be thought of more martial appearance than I am. My foreboding is that it will not be long ere thou and king Eric meet, if ye both live. And I shall be surprised if thou come not then to think that Gunnhilda has borne too many sons.'

The king said: 'Thou shalt not, Egil, become my liege-man. Thy kin have hewn far too many gaps in our house for it to be well that thou shouldst settle here in this land. Go thou out to Iceland, and dwell there on thy father's inheritance. No harm will there touch thee from our kin; but in this land 'tis to be looked for that through all thy days our kin will be the more powerful. Yet for the sake of king Athelstan, my foster-father, thou shalt have peace here in the land, and shalt get law and land-right, for I know that he holds thee right dear.'

Egil thanked the king for his words, and prayed that the king would give him sure tokens to Thord in Aurland, or to other barons in Sogn and Hordaland. The king said that this should be done.



CHAPTER LXVII.

Egil slays Ljot the Pale.

THORSTEIN and Egil made ready for their journey so soon as they had ended their errand. They then went their way back, and when they came south over the Dovre-fell, then said Egil that he would go down to Raumsdale, and after that south by way of the sounds. 'I will,' said he, 'finish my business in Sogn and Hordaland, for I would fain in the summer take my ship out to Iceland.' Thorstein bade him settle his journey as he would. So Thorstein and Egil separated.

Thorstein went south by the dales all the way till he

came to his estates. There he produced the tokens of the king and his message before the stewards, that they should give up all that property which they had taken and Thorstein claimed. No one spoke against it, and he then took all his property.

Egil went his way, they being twelve in all. They came on to Raumsdale, there got them conveyance, and then went south to Mæri. Nothing is told of their journey before they came to the island called Hod, and went to pass the night at a farm named Bindheim. This was a well-to-do homestead, in which dwelt a baron named Fridgeir. He was young in years, and had but lately inherited his father's property. His mother was named Gyda; she was a sister of lord Arinbjorn, a woman of a noble presence and wealthy. She managed the house for her son Fridgeir: they lived in grand style. There Egil and his company found good welcome. In the evening Egil sat next to Fridgeir, and his comrades outside him. There was much drink and sumptuous viands. Gyda, the house-mistress, in the evening had some talk with Egil. She inquired about Arinbjorn, her brother, and other of her kinsmen and friends who had gone to England with Arinbjorn. Egil answered her inquiries. She asked what tidings had befallen in Egil's journey. He told her plainly. Then he sang :

‘Gloomy on me glowered
In gruesome wrath a king :
But cuckoo faints and fails not
For vulture flapping near.
Aid good from Arinbjorn,
As oft, and peace I gat.
He falls not whom true friends
Help forward on his way.’

Egil was very cheerful that evening, but Fridgeir and his household were rather silent. Egil saw there a maiden fair and well dressed; he was told that she was Fridgeir's sister. The maiden was sad and wept constantly that evening, which they thought strange. They were there for the night, but in the morning the wind was blowing hard, and there was no putting to sea. They needed a boat to take them from the island. Then went Fridgeir and with him Gyda

to Egil, and offered that he and his comrades should stay there till it was good travelling weather, and should have thence such help for the journey as they needed. This Egil accepted. They stayed there weather-bound for three nights, most hospitably entertained. After that the weather became calm.

Then Egil and his men rose up early in the morning and made ready; then went to meat, and ale was given them to drink, and they sat awhile. Then they took their clothes. Egil stood up and thanked the master and mistress of the house for their entertainment; then they went out. The master and his mother went out into the path with them. Gyda then went to speak with her son Fridgeir, and talked low with him, Egil standing the while and waiting for them.

Egil said to the maiden: 'Why weep you, maiden? I never see you cheerful.'

She could not answer, but wept the more. Fridgeir now said to his mother aloud: 'I will not now ask this. They are even now ready for their journey.'

Then Gyda went to Egil and said: 'I will tell you, Egil, how things stand here with us. There is a man named Ljot the Pale. He is a Berserk and a duellist; he is hated. He came here and asked my daughter to wife; but we answered at once, refusing the match. Whereupon he challenged my son Fridgeir to wager of battle; and he has to go to-morrow to this combat on the island called Vors. Now I wished, Egil, that you should go to the combat with Fridgeir. It would soon be shown if Arinbjorn were here in the land, that we should not endure the overbearing of such a fellow as is Ljot.'

Egil said: 'Tis but my bounden duty, lady, for the sake of Arinbjorn thy kinsman that I go, if Fridgeir thinks this any help to him.'

'Herein you do well,' said Gyda. 'So we will go back into the hall, and be all together for the whole day.'

Then Egil and the rest went into the hall and drank. They sate there for the day. But in the evening came those friends of Fridgeir who had appointed to go with him, and there was a numerous company for the night, and a great

banquet. On the morrow Fridgeir made ready to go, and many with him, Egil being one of the party. It was now good travelling weather.

They now start, and soon come to the island. There was a fair plain near the sea, which was to be the place of combat. The ground was marked out by stones lying round in a ring. Soon came thither Ljot and his party. Then he made him ready for the combat. He had shield and sword. Ljot was a man of vast size and strong. And as he came forward on the field to the ground of combat, a fit of Berserk fury seized him ; he began to bellow hideously, and bit his shield. Fridgeir was not a tall man ; he was slenderly built, comely in face, not strong. He had not been used to combats. But when Egil saw Ljot, then he sang a stave :

‘ It fits not young Fridgeir
To fight with this warrior,
Grim gnawer of shield-rim,
By his gods who doth curse.
I better may meet him,
May rescue the maiden ;
Full fearsome he stareth,
Yet “fey” are his eyes.’

Ljot saw where Egil stood, and heard his words. He said : ‘ Come thou hither, big man, to the holm, and fight with me, if thou hast a wish that way. That is a far more even match than that I should fight with Fridgeir, for I shall deem me no whit the greater man though I lay him low on earth.’

Then sang Egil :

‘ Ljot asketh but little,
Loth were I to baulk him.
Pale wight, my wand pliant
Shall play on his mail.
Come, busk we for combat ;
Nor quarter expect thou :
Strife-stirrer, in Mæri
Stern shield-cutting ours.’

After this Egil made him ready for combat with Ljot. Egil had the shield that he was wont to have, was girded with the sword which he called Adder, but in his hand he had Dragvandill. He went in over the boundary that

marked the battle-ground, but Ljot was then not ready. Egil shook his sword and sang :

‘ Hew we with hilt-wands flashing,
Hack we shield with falchion,
Test we moony targets,
Tinge red sword in blood.
Ljot from life be sundered,
Low stern play shall lay him,
Quelled the quarrel-seeker :
Come, eagles, to your prey.’

Then Ljot came forward on the field and declared the law of combat, that he should ever after bear the name of dastard who should draw back outside the boundary stones that were set up in a ring round the field of combat. This done, they closed, and Egil dealt a blow at Ljot, which Ljot parried with his shield, but Egil then dealt blow upon blow so fast that Ljot got no chance for a blow in return. He drew back to get room for a stroke, but Egil pressed as quickly after him, dealing blows with all his vigour. Ljot went out beyond the boundary stones far into the field. So ended the first bout. Then Ljot begged for a rest. Egil let it be so. They stopped therefore and rested. And Egil sang :

‘ Free-handed gold-giver,
Back goeth yon champion,
In craven fear crouches
This wealth-craving wight.
Not strongly fights spearman
His strokes who delayeth.
Lo beat by a bald-head
This bragging pest flies.’

These were the laws of wager of battle in those times, that when one man challenged another on any claim, and the challenger gained the victory, then he should have as prize of victory that which he had claimed in his challenge. But if he were vanquished, then should he ransom himself for such price as should be fixed. But if he were slain on the field, then had he forfeited all his possessions, and he who slew him in the combat should take his inheritance. This was also law, that if a foreigner died who had no heir in the land, then that inheritance fell to the king's treasury.

And now Egil bade Ljot be ready.

‘I will,’ he said, ‘that we now try to the uttermost this combat.’

Ljot sprang swiftly to his feet. Egil bounded at him and dealt at once a blow at him. He pressed him so close, that he was driven back, and the shield shifted from before him. Then smote Egil at Ljot, and the blow came on him above the knee, taking off his leg. Ljot then fell and soon expired. Then Egil went to where Fridgeir and his party stood. He was heartily thanked for this work. Then sang Egil :

‘Fall’n lies the wolf-feeder,
Foul worker of mischief :
Ljot’s leg by skald sever’d
Leaves Fridgeir in peace.
From the free gold-giver
Guerdon none I seek me,
Sport I deem the spear-din,
Sport with such pale foe.’

Ljot’s death was little mourned, for he had been a turbulent bully. He was a Swede by birth, and had no kin there in the land. He had come thither and amassed him wealth by duels. He had slain many worthy landowners, whom he had first challenged to wager of battle for their lands and heritages ; he had now become very wealthy both in lands and chattels.

Egil went home with Fridgeir from the field of combat. He stayed there but a short time before going south to Mæri. Egil and Fridgeir parted with much affection. Egil charged Fridgeir with the securing of those lands that had belonged to Ljot. Egil went on his way and came to the Firths, whence he went into Sogn to seek Thord in Aurland. Thord received him well ; he declared his errand and the message of king Hacon. These words of Egil were taken well by Thord, who promised him his help in this matter. Egil remained there with Thord far into the spring.



CHAPTER LXVIII.

Of Egil's journeyings.

E GIL went on southwards to Hordaland, taking for this journey a rowing vessel, and thereon thirty men. They came on a day to Askr on Fenhring island. Egil went up to the house with twenty men, while ten guarded the ship.

Atli the Short was there with some men. Egil bade him be called out and told that Egil Skallagrimsson had an errand with him. Atli took his weapons, as did all the fighting men that were there, and then they went out.

Egil spoke: 'I am told, Atli, that you hold in keeping that property which of right belongs to me and my wife Asgerdr. You will belike have heard it talked of ere now how I claimed the inheritance of Bjorn Yeoman, which Bergonund your brother kept from me. I am now come to look after that property, lands and chattels, and to beg you to give it up and pay it into my hands.'

Said Atli: 'Long have we heard, Egil, that you are a most unjust man, but now I shall come to prove it, if you mean to claim at my hands this property, which king Eric adjudged to Bergonund my brother. King Eric had then power to bid and ban in this land. I was thinking now, Egil, that you would be come here for this end, to offer me a fine for my brothers whose lives you took, and that you would pay atonement for the pillage committed by you here at Askr. I would make answer to this proposal, if you should plead this errand; but here to this other I can make none.'

'I shall then,' said Egil, 'offer you, as I offered Onund, that Gula-thing laws decide our cause. Your brothers I declare to have fallen without claim for fine and through their own wrong deeds, because they had first plundered me of law and land-right, and taken my property by force of arms. I have the king's leave herein to try the law with you in this cause. I summon you to the Gula-thing, there to have lawful decision on this matter.'

'To the Gula-thing,' said Atli, 'I will come, and we can there speak of this matter.'

Hereupon Egil with his comrades went away. He went north to Sogn, then into Aurland to Thord, his wife's kinsman, and there he stayed till the Gula-thing. And when men came to the Thing, then came Egil thither. Atli the Short was also there. They began to declare their cause, and pleaded it before those who were to judge. Egil made his demand of money due, but Atli offered against it as a lawful defence the oath of twelve men that he, Atli, had in keeping no money that belonged to Egil. And when Atli went before the court with his twelve who should swear, then went Egil to meet him, and said that he would not accept Atli's oaths for his own property. 'I will offer you other law, that we do battle here at the Thing, and he shall have the property who wins the victory.'

This was also law, that Egil proposed, and ancient custom, that any man had a right to challenge another to wager of battle, whether he were defendant in a cause or prosecutor.

Atli said that he would not refuse thus to do battle with Egil. 'For,' said he, 'you propose what I ought to have proposed, seeing that I have enough loss to avenge on you. You have done to death my two brothers, and far shall I be from upholding the right if I yield to you mine own possessions unlawfully rather than fight with you when you offer me this choice.'

So then Atli and Egil joined hands and pledged them to do battle, the victor to own the lands for which they had been disputing.

After this they arrayed them for the combat. Egil came forward with helm on head, and shield before him, and halberd in hand, but his sword Dragvandill he suspended from his right arm. It was the custom with those who fought in single combats so to arrange that the sword should need no drawing during the fight, but be attached to the arm, to be ready at once when the combatant willed. Atli had the same arming as Egil. He was experienced in single combats, was a strong man, and of a good courage. To the field was led forth a bull, large and old—'sacrificial beast' such was termed—to be slain by him who won the victory. Sometimes there was one such ox, sometimes each combatant had his own led forth.

And when they were ready for the combat, then ran they each at the other, and first they threw their halberds, neither of which stood fast in the foeman's shield, but both stuck in the ground. Then took they both to their swords, and went at it with a will, blow upon blow. Atli gave no ground. They smote fast and hard, and full soon their shields were becoming useless. And when Atli's shield was of no use, then he cast it from him, and, grasping his sword with both hands, dealt blows as quickly as possible. Egil fetched him a blow on the shoulder, but the sword bit not. He dealt another, and a third. It was now easy to find parts in Atli that he could strike, since he had no cover ; and Egil brandished and brought down his sword with all his might, yet it bit not, strike he where he might. Then Egil saw that nothing would be done this way, for his shield was now rendered useless. So Egil let drop both sword and shield, and bounding on Atli, gripped him with his hands. Then the difference of strength was seen, and Atli fell right back, but Egil went down prone upon him and bit through his throat. There Atli died.

Egil leapt up at once and ran to where the victim stood ; with one hand he gripped his lips, with the other his horn, and gave him such a wrench, that his feet slipped up and his neck was broken ; after which Egil went where his comrades stood, and then he sang :

' I bared blue Dragvandill,
Who bit not the buckler,
Atli the Short so blunted
All edge by his spells.
Straining my strength I grappled,
Staggered the wordy foeman ;
My tooth I bade bite him,
Best of swords at need.'

Then Egil got possession of all those lands for which he had contended and claimed as rightfully coming to his wife Asgerdr from her father. Nothing is told of further tidings at that Thing. Egil then went first into Sogn and arranged about those lands that he now got into his own power. He remained there for a great part of the spring. Afterwards he went with his comrades eastwards to Vik, then to seek Thorstein, and was there for awhile.

CHAPTER LXIX.

Egil comes out to Iceland.

IN the summer Egil prepared his ship, and, when all was ready, at once set sail for Iceland. His voyage sped well. He came to Borgar-firth and brought in his ship just below his own house. He had his cargo conveyed home, and set up his ship. Egil stayed in his home that winter. He had now brought out very great wealth, and was a very rich man. He had a large and lofty house. Egil was by no means meddlesome with other men's matters, nor generally presuming when here in Iceland; nor did any try to encroach on what was his. Egil remained at home now for years not a few. Egil and Asgerdr had children thus named: Bodvar a son, and another son Gunnar; Thorgerdr a daughter, and Bera. Their youngest was Thorstein. All Egil's children were of good promise and intelligence. Thorgerdr was the eldest of the children, Bera the next.



CHAPTER LXX.

Egil goes abroad.

EGIL heard tidings from east over seas that Eric Blood-axe had fallen in the west while freebooting; but Gunnhilda and her sons and Eric's had gone to Denmark, and all those that had followed Eric to England had left that country. This, too, he heard, that Arinbjorn was now come to Norway. He had taken again the grants and possessions that he had before, and had gotten great favour with the king. Then Egil thought it desirable again to go to Norway. Besides this came the tidings that king Athelstan was dead. His brother Edmund now ruled England.

So Egil made ready his ship, and got him a crew. Aunund Sjoni was among them, son of Ani of Anabrekka. Aunund was tall, and the strongest of those men who were then in the country-side; nay, some doubted whether he were not shape-strong. Aunund had often been on voyages

from land to land. He was somewhat older than Egil ; there had long been friendship between the two.

And when Egil was ready he put out to sea, and their voyage sped well ; they came to Mid-Norway. And when they sighted land, they steered for the Firths. They soon got tidings from land, and it was told them that Arinbjorn was at home on his estate.

Egil put his ship into the haven nearest to Arinbjorn's house ; then went he to seek Arinbjorn, and a most joyful meeting was theirs. Arinbjorn offered quarters to Egil and such of his men as he liked to bring. This Egil accepted, and had his ship set up on rollers ; but his crew found them quarters. Egil and eleven with him went to Arinbjorn's. Egil had caused to be made a long ship's sail, elaborately worked ; this he gave to Arinbjorn, and yet other gifts of value. Egil was there for the winter, treated with much honour.

In the winter Egil went southwards to Sogn to collect his land-rents, staying there some time. After that he came north again to the Firths. Arinbjorn held a great Yule-feast, to which he bade his friends and the neighbouring land-owners. There was there much company and good cheer. Arinbjorn gave Egil as a Yule-gift a trailing robe made of silk, and richly broidered with gold, studded with gold buttons in front all down to the hem. Arinbjorn had had the robe made to fit Egil's stature. Arinbjorn gave also to Egil at Yule a complete suit newly made ; it was cut of English cloth of many colours. Friendly gifts of many kinds gave Arinbjorn at Yule to those who were his guests, for Arinbjorn was beyond all men open-handed and noble.

Then Egil composed a stave :

‘Warrior gave to poet
Silken robe gold-glistening :
Never shall I find me
Friend of better faith.
Arinbjorn untiring
Earneth well his honours :
For his like the ages
Long may look in vain.’



CHAPTER LXXI.

Egil's sadness.

EGIL after Yule-tide was taken with such sadness that he spake not a word. And when Arinbjorn perceived this he began to talk with Egil, and asked what this sadness meant. 'I wish,' said he, 'you would let me know whether you are sick, or anything ails you, that I may find a remedy.'

Egil said: 'Sickness of body I have none; but I have much anxiety about this, how I shall get that property which I won when I slew Ljot the Pale northwards in Mæra. I am told that the king's stewards have taken up all that property, and claimed ownership thereof for the king. Now I would fain have your help in the recovery of this.'

Arinbjorn said: 'I do not think your claim to the ownership of that property is against the law of the land; yet methinks the property is now come into strong keeping. The king's treasury hath a wide entrance, but a narrow exit. We have urged many arduous claims of money against powerful persons, but we were in more confidence with the king than now; for the friendship between me and king Hacon is shallow; yet must I act after the old saw: He must tend the oak who is to dwell beneath it.'

'Yet,' said Egil, 'my mind is that, if we have law to show, we should try. Maybe the king will grant us right in this, for I am told that the king is just, and keeps well to the laws which he has made here in the land. I am rather minded to go seek the king and try the matter with him.'

Arinbjorn said that he did not desire this. 'I think, Egil, that these things will be hard to reconcile, your eagerness and daring, and the king's temper and power. For I deem him to be no friend of yours, and for good reason as he thinks. I would rather that we let this matter drop, and did not take it up. But if you wish it, Egil, I will rather myself go to the king and moot the question.'

Egil said that he thanked him heartily, and would choose it to be so.

Hacon was then in Rogaland, but at times in Hordaland;

there was no difficulty in finding him. And not long after this talk Arinbjorn made ready for his journey. It was then publicly known that he purposed to seek the king. He manned with his house-carles a twenty-oared galley that he had. Egil was to stay at home ; Arinbjorn would not have him go. Arinbjorn started when ready, and his journey went well ; he found king Hacon, and was well received.

And when he had been there a little while, he declared his errand before the king, and said that Egil Skallagrimsson was come there in the land, and thought he had a claim to all that property that had belonged to Ljot the Pale. 'We are told, O king, that Egil pleads but law in this ; but your stewards have taken up the property, and claimed ownership for you. I would pray you, my lord, that Egil may get law herein.'

The king was slow to speak, but at length answered : 'I know not, Arinbjorn, why thou comest with such pleading for Egil. He came once before me, and I told him that I would not have him sojourn here in the land, for reasons which ye already know. Now Egil must not set up such claim before me as he did before my brother Eric. And to thee, Arinbjorn, I have this to say, that thou mayest be here in the land only so long as thou preferrest not foreigners before me and my word ; for I know that thy heart is with Harold son of Eric, thy foster-son ; and this is thy best choice, to go to those brothers and be with them ; for I strongly suspect that men like thee will be ill to trust to, if I and Eric's sons ever have to try conclusions.'

And when the king had so spoken, Arinbjorn saw that it would not do to plead this cause any further with him ; so he prepared to return home. The king was rather sullen and gloomy towards Arinbjorn after he knew his errand ; but Arinbjorn was not in the mood to humble himself before the king about this matter. And so they parted.

Arinbjorn went home and told Egil the issue of his errand. 'I will not,' said he, 'again plead such a cause to the king.'

Egil at this report frowned much ; he thought he had lost much wealth, and wrongfully. A few days after, early one

morning when Arinbjorn was in his chamber and few men were present, he had Egil called thither; and when he came, then Arinbjorn had a chest opened, and weighed out forty marks of silver, adding these words: 'This money I pay you, Egil, for those lands which belonged to Ljot the Pale. I deem it just that you should have this reward from me and my kinsman Fridgeir for saving his life from Ljot; for I know that you did this for love of me. I therefore am bound not to let you be cheated of your lawful right in this matter.'

Egil took the money, and thanked Arinbjorn. Then Egil again became quite cheerful.



CHAPTER LXXII.

Of Arinbjorn's harrying.

ARINBJORN stayed at home on his estate that winter, but in the next spring he let it be known that he meant to go a-freebooting. Arinbjorn had good choice of ships. He made ready in the spring three warships, all large, and he had three hundred men. His house-carles he had on his own ship, which was excellently equipt; he had also with him many landowners' sons. Egil settled to go with him; he steered a ship, and with him went many of the comrades whom he brought from Iceland. But the merchant-ship which he brought from Iceland he caused to be moved eastwards to Vik, getting some men there to dispose of the cargo.

But Arinbjorn and Egil with the war-ships held a southward course along the coast; then took their force still southwards to Saxland, where they harried in the summer and got wealth. As autumn came on they came back northward harrying, and lay off Friesland. One night when the weather was calm they went up a large river-mouth, where was bad harbourage, and the ebb of the tide was great. There up on land were wide flats with woods hard by. The fields were soaked because there had been much rain. They resolved to go up there, and left behind a third

of their force to guard the ships. They followed up the river, keeping between it and the woods. Soon they came to a hamlet where dwelt several peasants. The people ran out of the hamlet into the fields, such as could do so, when they perceived the enemy, but the freebooters pursued them. Then they came to a second village, and a third; all the people fled before them. The land was level, flat fields everywhere, intersected by dykes full of water. By these the corn-lands or meadows were enclosed; in some places large stakes were set, and over the dyke, where men should go, were bridges and planks laid. The country folk fled to the forest. But when the freebooters had gone far into the settled parts, the Frisians gathered them in the woods, and when they had assembled three hundred men, they went against the freebooters resolved to give them battle. There was then some hard fighting; but the end was that the Frisians fled and the freebooters pursued the fugitives. The peasants that escaped were scattered far and wide, and so were their pursuers. Thus it happened that on either side few kept together.

Egil was hotly pursuing, and a few with him, after a numerous company that fled. The Frisians came to a dyke, over which they went, and then drew away the bridge. Then came up Egil and his men on the other bank. Egil at once went at the dyke and leapt it, but it was no leap for other men, and no one tried it. But when the Frisians saw that but one man was following, they turned back and attacked him, but he defended himself well, and used the dyke to cover him behind so that they could not attack him on all sides. Eleven men set on him, but the end of their encounter was that he slew them all. After that Egil pushed out the bridge over the dyke, and crossed it back again. He then saw that all his people had turned back to the ships. He was then near the wood, and he now went along the wood towards the ships so that he had the choice of the wood if he needed its shelter. The freebooters had brought down to the shore much booty and cattle. And when they came to the ships, some slaughtered the cattle, some carried out the plunder to the ships, some stood higher up and formed a shield-burgh; for the Frisians

were come down in great force and were shooting at them, being also in battle array. And when Egil came down and saw how matters stood, he ran at full speed right at the throng. His halberd he held before him grasped in both hands, and slung his shield behind his back. He thrust forward his halberd, and all before him started aside, and so gat he a passage right through their ranks. Thus he dashed down to his men, who looked on him as recovered from the dead.

Then they went on ship-board, and loosed from land. They sailed then to Denmark. And when they came to Lima-firth and lay at Hals, Arinbjorn held a meeting of his men, and laid before them his plans. 'Now will I,' said he, 'go seek Eric's sons with such force as will follow me. I have now learnt that the brothers are in Denmark here, and maintain a large following, and spend the summers in harrying, but for the winters abide here in Denmark. I now give leave to all to go to Norway who would rather do that than follow me. For you, Egil, methinks, the best counsel is that, as soon as we part, you return to Norway, and then on with all speed to Iceland.'

Then the men separated to their several ships. Those who wished to go back to Norway joined Egil, but by far the larger part of the force followed Arinbjorn. Arinbjorn and Egil parted in love and friendship. Arinbjorn went to seek Eric's sons, and joined the company of Harold Grayfell his foster-son, and was with him henceforth so long as they both lived.

Egil went northwards to Vik, and into Osloar-firth. There was his merchant ship which he had caused to be moved thither in the spring. There were also his cargo and the men who had gone with the ship. Thorstein Thora's son came to seek Egil, and asked him and such men as he would bring to stay with him that winter. Egil accepted the offer, had his ship set up and the cargo safely bestowed. Of his followers some got quarters there, some went to their several homes in the north. Egil in a company of ten or twelve went to Thorstein's, and remained there for the winter an honoured guest.

CHAPTER LXXIII.

Mission to Vermaland.

King HAROLD FAIRHAIR had subdued Vermaland eastwards as far as Lake Wener. Vermaland had first been cleared and tilled by Olaf Tree-cutter, father of Halfdan Whitebone, who first of his family was king in Norway; and from him on the father's side was king Harold descended, and all his forefathers had ruled over Vermaland and taken tribute therefrom, and set men in charge over the land. But when Harold was grown old, then was an earl named Arnid governor of Vermaland. It happened there, as elsewhere, that the tribute was worse paid now than when Harold was in the vigour of life. So also was it when Harold's sons strove for the rule in Norway, the outlying tributary lands were little looked after. But when Hacon sat in peace, then enquired he after all the empire that his father Harold had had. King Hacon had sent eastwards to Vermaland a company of twelve men. These had received the tribute from the earl. But as they were going back by Eida-wood, robbers set upon them and slew them all. The same hap befell yet other messengers sent by king Hacon eastwards to Vermaland; the men were slain, and no money was brought back. Then was it said by some that earl Arnid belike set men of his own to slay the king's men, while he kept the tribute for himself. Whereupon king Hacon sent yet a third company.

He was then in Thronheim; the messengers were to go to Vik and seek Thorstein Thora's son with these words, that he should go eastwards to Vermaland and gather in the tribute for the king, or else he must leave the land. For the king had heard that Arinbjorn Thorstein's mother's brother was gone southwards to Denmark and was with Eric's sons, and further that they had a large following and spent the summer in harrying. King Hacon mistrusted the loyalty of all this company, expecting as he did hostilities from Eric's sons if they had but strength to raise rebellion against him. And to Arinbjorn's kinsmen and friends he

showed great dislike, putting some to death, driving some from the land, or laying on them other hard conditions. And so it was that before Thorstein the king put this choice.

The man who bore this message was named Kol ; he was a man of all lands ; he had been long in Denmark and in Sweden, and knew all about ways and men there. In Norway too he had travelled widely. And when he brought this proposal to Thorstein Thora's son, then Thorstein told Egil upon what errand these men came, and asked how he should answer them ; he said that it seemed a hard thing for him to lose his possessions and be driven out of the land.

Egil said : 'It is to me quite clear what this message means ; the king will have you out of the land like others of Arinbjorn's kin, for I call sending a man of your nobleness on such errand a sending to certain death. My advice is that you call the king's messengers to conference with you, and I will be present at your talk, and we will see what comes of it.'

Thorstein did as he bade ; he held conference with them. The messengers told all the truth of their errand and of the king's message, that Thorstein must go on this mission or else be outlawed.

Egil said : 'I see clearly about your errand, that if Thorstein refuses to go, then you will have to go and gather in the tribute.' The messengers said that he guessed rightly. Said Egil : 'Thorstein shall not go on this journey ; for he is in nowise bound thereto, a man of his renown, to go on such mean missions. Thorstein will do that whereto he is bound, to wit, attend the king within the land or without, if the king demands it. Also, if ye want to have some men from hence for this journey, this will be granted you, and all such furtherance of your journey as ye may name to Thorstein.'

Then the messengers talked among themselves, and agreed that they would accept these terms, if Egil would go with them on the journey. 'The king,' they said, 'bears him great ill-will, and he will think our journey a right good one if we bring it about that Egil be slain. He can then drive Thorstein out of the land if he pleases.' So they told

Thorstein that they would be content if Egil went and Thorstein stayed at home.

‘So shall it be,’ said Egil. ‘I will release Thorstein from this journey. But how many men think ye that ye need to take from hence?’

‘We are eight,’ said they; ‘we would fain have four men go from hence; then are we twelve.’

Egil said it should be so. Aunund Sjoni and some of Egil’s company had gone out to sea, to look after their ship and another cargo which they had given into safe keeping in the autumn, and they had not yet returned. Egil thought this a great pity, but the king’s men were impatient to be gone, and would not wait.



CHAPTER LXXIV.

Journey to Vermaland.

EGIL with three comrades made him ready for the journey. They had horses and sledges, and so had the king’s men. There was then deep snow, and all the roads were effaced. They betook them to their journey when they were ready, and sledged up the land; and when they came eastwards near Eida, it happened one night that so much fresh snow fell that they could not see the way. On the morrow they travelled slowly, because there were snowdrifts directly one left the track. And as the day wore on they stopped to bait their horses; this was near a wooded ridge. Then spoke the king’s men with Egil: ‘Here now the roads divide; forward below the ridge dwells a landowner named Arnold, our friend; we with our party will go and lodge there. But you shall go yonder up the ridge, and when you come over it you will soon have before you a large house where you are sure of lodging. A wealthy man dwells there, Armod Beard by name. But to-morrow early we will again join company and go on the next evening to Eida-wood. There dwells a worthy landowner named Thorfinn.’

Upon this they separated, Egil and his men going up the ridge. But of the king’s men this is to be told, that no

sooner were they and Egil out of sight of each other, than they took their snow-shoes (which they had brought with them) and put them on ; then they retraced their way as fast as they could. Night and day they travelled, and turned toward Upland, thence north by the Dovre-fell, nor stayed they till they came before king Hacon, and told him of their journey, how it had sped.

Egil and his comrades crossed the ridge that evening. To be brief, so soon as they left the main road and got upon the ridge, they found deep snow, steep rocks, tangled copsewood. Now and again in the snow the horses so plunged and lay that they had to be pulled up out of it, and over rocks and crags was a hard struggle. Much ado had they with the horses ; but the walking for the men was of the heaviest, and sorely wearied were they when they came off the ridge and saw before them a large house, for which they made.

And when they came to the enclosure, they saw men standing outside, Armod and some of his household. They exchanged words and asked each other's tidings, and when Armod knew that they were messengers of the king, he offered them lodging. This they accepted. Armod's house-carles took their horses and harness ; but the master bade Egil go into the hall, and they did so.

Armod made Egil sit in the high seat on the lower bench, and his comrades outside him. They spoke much of what a toilsome way they had come that evening, but the house-carles thought it a great marvel that they had won through it at all ; it was, they said, no road for man even were it free of snow.

Then said Armod : ' Think ye not this were the best hospitality, that a table should be set for you and supper given you now, and then you should sleep ? This will best rest you.'

' We should like this right well,' said Egil.

So Armod had a table set for them, whereon were placed large bowls full of curds. Then said Armod that he was sorry he had no beer to give them. Egil and his men were very thirsty from weariness ; they took up the bowls and drank the curds eagerly, Egil drinking far the most. No other food was brought.

The household was numerous. The mistress sat on the cross-bench, and beside her the other women. The master's daughter, ten or eleven years old, was running about the hall-floor. The mistress called her to her side, and spoke in her ear. Then the girl went out to where Egil sat, and recited a verse :

‘To thee with this message
My mother doth send me,
To bear word that Egil
Be wary and wait.
“So temper thy stomach,”
Thus sayeth our lady,
“With fare far more worthy
Soon feed we our guests.”’

Armod struck the girl, and bade her hold her tongue : ‘You are always,’ said he, ‘saying what least suits.’

The girl went away ; but Egil threw down the curd-bowl, which was now nearly empty. The bowls were then removed from them.

And now the household took their seats, and tables were set all round the hall, and food served ; dishes of meat were brought in and set before Egil and the rest. After this ale was borne in, beer of the strongest. Soon they began to drink bumpers, each man was to drink off the horn ; and especial care was taken that Egil and his companions should drink hard. Egil drank without shirking a drop for a long while, but when his companions were become helpless, then he drank for them what they could not. So matters went on till the tables were removed, and by then all in the room were well drunk.

But before each cup that he drank Armod said, ‘I drink to you, Egil,’ and the house-carles drank to Egil's companions with the same preface. A man was appointed to bear every cup to Egil's party, and he urged them to drink it off quick. Egil told his companions to drink no more, but himself drank for them what they could not avoid.

Egil soon found that it would not do for him to go on so. Wherefore he stood up, went across the floor to where Armod sat, took him with his hands by the shoulders, and forced him back against the inner posts, and spat in his face. There was an outcry and uproar, but Egil went back

to his place, sate him down, and bade them serve him drink.

Armod leapt up and ran out ; Egil continued to drink for a while, as did some others in the hall ; but there was little merriment. Soon Egil and his men stood up, and took their weapons from the wall where they had hung them up ; they then went to the granary in which their horses were, and laid themselves down in the straw, and slept through the night.



CHAPTER LXXV.

Parting of Egil and Armod.

EGIL rose up in the morning as soon as it was day. He and his made them ready, and when ready went at once to the house to seek Armod. And when they came to the apartments where slept Armod and his wife and daughter, then Egil burst open the door and approached Armod's bed. He then drew his sword, but with the other hand grasped the beard of Armod, and forced him forward to the edge of the bed. But Armod's wife and daughter leapt up and prayed Egil not to slay Armod. Egil said he would spare him for their sakes ; 'For,' said he, 'this is but meet ; yet has he deserved to die.'

After this Egil cut off his beard close to his chin, and put out one of his eyes. Then he went out to his companions.

They went on their way and came at day-meal-time to the house of Thorfinn. He dwelt by Eida-wood. Of him they craved a day-meal and to bait their horses. Thorfinn granted this, and Egil with his men went into the hall. Egil asked if Thorfinn had seen anything of the rest of his party.

'We appointed,' he said, 'to meet here.'

Thorfinn said : 'Here passed six men together a little before day ; and they were well armed.'

Then said a house-carle : 'I was driving a sledge in the night to fetch wood, and I came upon six men on the road ; they were house-carles of Armod ; but that was long before

day. Now I am not sure whether these will be the same as the six of whom you spoke.'

Thorfinn said that the six men whom he had met had passed after the house-carle came back with the load of wood.

While they sat at meat Egil saw that a woman lay sick on the dais at the end of the hall. He asked who was that woman in such sad case. Thorfinn said she was named Helga, and was his daughter; she had long been ill; her complaint was a pining sickness; she got no sleep at night, and was as one possessed.

'Has anything,' asked Egil, 'been tried for her ailment?'

'Runes have been graven,' said Thorfinn; 'a landowner's son hard by did this; and she is since much worse than before. But can you, Egil, do anything for such ailments?'

Egil said: 'Maybe no harm will be done by my taking it in hand.'

And when Egil had finished his meal, he went where the woman lay and spoke with her. Then he bade them lift her from her place and lay clean clothes under her, and they did so. Next he searched the bed in which she had lain, and there he found a piece of whalebone whereon were runes. Egil read them, then cut the runes and scraped them off into the fire. He burned the whole piece of whalebone, and had the bed-clothes that she had used hung out to air. Then Egil sang:

'Runes none should grave ever
Who knows not to read them;
Of dark spell full many
The meaning may miss.
Ten spell-words writ wrongly
On whale-bone were graven:
Whence to leek-tending maiden,
Long sorrow and pain.'

Egil then graved runes, and laid them under the bolster of the bed where the woman lay. She seemed as if she waked out of sleep, and said she now felt well, but she was weak. But her father and mother were overjoyed. And Thorfinn offered to Egil all the furtherance that he might think needful.

CHAPTER LXXVI.

Egil comes to landowner Alf.

EGIL said to his comrades that he would go on his way and bide no longer. Thorfinn had a son named Helgi, a valiant man. Father and son offered Egil their company through the wood. They said they knew for a fact that Armod Beard had put six men into the wood to lie in wait for them, and it was likely that there would be more ambushed in the wood in case the first should fail. There were with Thorfinn four that offered to go. Then Egil sang a stave :

' If four with me follow,
 Thou findest not six men
 With us bloody sword-blows
 To barter in fight.
 And if he with eight go,
 Undaunted in courage
 On twelve black-browed Egil
 The battle will dare.'

Thorfinn and his men decided to go into the wood with Egil : thus they were eight in all. And when they came where the ambush was set, they saw men there. But these house-carles of Armod who were in ambush, on seeing that the travellers were eight in number, thought they were overmatched, and hid them away in the wood. And when Egil's party came where the liers-in-wait had been, they saw that all was not peaceful. And now Egil said that Thorfinn and his men should go back, but they offered to go further. However Egil would not have it, and bade them go home ; so they did so and turned back.

But Egil and his men went on forward, being now four. And as the day wore on they perceived that there were six men in the wood, and they were pretty sure that these also were house-carles of Armod. Up leapt the liers-in-wait and made at them, and they met their charge : and the encounter ended in Egil's slaying two and the rest running back into the wood.

Then Egil's company went on their way, and nothing more happened till they got out of the wood and found

lodging near the wood with a landowner named Alf, who was called Alf the wealthy. He was an old man, wealthy in money, of a strange temper, so that he could keep but few in his household. A good reception Egil found there, and with him Alf was talkative. Egil asked many questions, and Alf told him what he asked. They spoke much about the earl and the king of Norway's messengers, who had before gone eastward to gather the tribute. Alf in his talk was no friend to the earl.



CHAPTER LXXVII.

Egil gathers tribute.

EGIL made him ready early next morning to continue his journey, as did his comrades, but at parting Egil gave Alf a fur cloak. Alf took the gift with thanks, saying, 'A good mantle have I here.' And he bade Egil visit him on the way back. They parted friends ; and Egil going on his way came on the evening of a day to earl Arnid's court, where he found a good reception. He and his comrades were placed next to the sitter in the seat opposite the earl.

When Egil had been there for a night, he declared his errand with the earl, and the message of the king from Norway, and said that he wished to have all that tribute from Vermaland that had been owing since Arnid had been set over the land. The earl said that he had paid out of hand all the tribute, and delivered it into the hands of the king's messengers. 'But I know not,' he said, 'what they have since done with it, whether they brought it to the king or ran away with it out of the land. However, as ye bear sure tokens that the king has sent you, I will pay all the tribute to which he has a right, and deliver it into your hands : but I will not be answerable afterwards for how you fare with it.' Egil and his men remained there for awhile. But before Egil went away the earl paid them the tribute. Part was in silver, part in gray fur.

And when Egil's party were ready they started to return. At their parting Egil said to the earl : 'Now we will bear to

the king this tribute which we have received. But know, earl, that this is much less money than the king deems to be his due here ; and that too without counting that, as he thinks, thou oughtest to pay atonement for the messengers whom common rumour says thou didst cause to be slain.' The earl said that that was not true. With this they parted.

Now when Egil was gone, the earl called to him his two brothers, each of whom was named Ulf, and spoke thus : 'That big fellow Egil, who was here for awhile, will, I expect, do us an ill turn when he comes to the king. We may by this mark how he will bear our matter before the king, that he threw in our face such a charge, the taking the life of the king's men. Now must ye two go after their party and slay them all, and let none bear this slander before the king. Methinks the wisest plan were to lie in wait for them in Eida-wood. Take with you so many men as to make sure that not one of them escape, while ye get no loss of men from them.'

Then did the brothers make them ready for their journey, and they took thirty men. They went to the wood, of which they knew every path : then they watched for Egil's coming. There were two roads through the wood. One led over a certain ridge, and there was a steep cliff, and only a path for one ; this was the shorter road. The other led round the end of the ridge, over wide bogs, across which hewn wood was laid, there too making a causeway for but one to pass. And they lay in wait fifteen in either place.



CHAPTER LXXVIII.

Egil and his band slay twenty-five men.

EGIL went till he came to Alf's, and was there for the night in good quarters. Next morning he rose before day and made ready for his journey. And while they sat over their morning meal, Alf the master came in. He said : 'You are making a start betimes, Egil ; but my counsel would be that you hurry not your journey, but rather look before you, for I think there be liers-in-wait for you in the wood. I have no men to give you as escort who

would be any strength to you: but this I offer, that ye tarry here with me till I can report to you that the wood is safe.' Egil said: 'That will be mere nonsense. I will go on my way as I before-meant to do.'

So he and his men made ready to go, while Alf tried to stop them, and bade them come back, if they saw that the way was trodden: 'None,' he said, 'have passed the wood from the east since you, Egil, went eastward, except these, who, as I suspect, have gone wishing to encounter you.' Egil said, 'How many will they be, think you, if it is as you say? We have not lost the game, though there be some odds against us.' Alf said: 'I with my house-carles had gone to the wood, and we came on men's footprints; the trail led into the wood, and there must have been many in all. But if you do not believe this that I say, go and see for yourself the trail, and then turn back, if it seems as I tell you.' Egil went his way, and when they came where the road entered the wood, they saw there the tracks both of men and horses. Egil's comrades then advised that they should turn back. 'We will go on,' said Egil: 'methinks 'tis no wonder that men have gone through Eida-wood, for it is a public road.' So they went on, and the footmarks continued, being of a numerous company. And when they came there where the roads forked, then the trail also forked, and was equally strong either way.

Then said Egil: 'Now I think that maybe Alf has told the truth. We will now make us ready as expecting an encounter.' So then Egil and his men doffed their cloaks and all their loose clothing, and laid these on the sledge. Egil had brought in his sledge a very long cord of bast, for it is the wont of those who take long sledging journeys to have with them some spare cord in case the harness need mending. Egil took a large flat stone, and laid it before his breast and stomach. Then he bent thereon the cord, and wound it round and round him, and so encased him right up to the shoulders.

Eida-wood is of this kind: there is reaching to the cultivated land on either side dense forest, but in the middle is a wide space of shrubs and thin copse, with some parts quite bare of wood. Egil and his company turned by the shorter way,

which lay over the ridge. They all had shields and helms, and weapons both to cut and thrust. Egil walked first. And when they came to the ridge, there was wood at the foot of it, but above on the rock it was bare. But when they came up to the rock, then seven men leapt out of the wood and up to the cliff after them, and shot at them. Egil and his men turned and stood abreast across the path. Then came other men against them from above on the crag's brow, and cast stones at them, and this was by far the greater danger. Then said Egil, 'Now must you step back close to the cliff, and cover yourselves as best ye may ; but I will try to win the summit.' They did so. And when Egil got past the rock out on the top, there were in front eight men, who all at once set upon him. Of their exchange of blows nought is there to tell : the end was that Egil slew them all. Then he went forward to the verge of the summit and hurled over stones, that none could withstand ; and thereafter three of the Vermians fell, but four gat them into the wood sore wounded and bruised.

Then Egil and his men took their horses and went on their way till they came over the ridge. But the Vermians who had escaped brought news of this to their fellows, who were by the bog. They then advanced by the lower road and so beset the way in front of Egil. Ulf said to his comrades : 'We must now go cunningly to work with them, and so manage that none get away. This,' said he, 'is the nature of the ground : the road skirts the ridge, close to the foot of which runs the bog, while a rocky brow is above, and the passage lies between these and is no broader than a footpath. Now some of us shall go forward round the brow to withstand them if they advance ; but some shall hide here in the wood, and leap out at their back when they have got on before us. And take we such heed that none escape.' They did as Ulf bade : Ulf went forward round the brow and ten men with him.

Egil and his men went on their way knowing nought of this plan till they came into the narrow path. Then out leapt men behind them, and drove at them with weapons. They faced about and defended themselves. Now also dashed at them those who were in front of the rocky brow ;

and when Egil saw that, he turned to meet them. Quick were the blows exchanged between them ; and Egil smote down some in the narrow pass, but some turned back to where there was more level space. Egil dashed after them. There fell Ulf. And in the end Egil slew there single-handed eleven men. Then he went where his comrades were keeping the pass before eight men : there were some wounded on either side. But when Egil came, then at once the Vermians fled to the wood hard by. Five escaped, all sore wounded, but three fell there. Egil had many wounds, but none serious.

They then continued their journey. He bound his comrades' wounds, none of which were mortal. They sat in the sledge, and drove for the rest of the day.

But the Vermians who escaped took their horses, and dragged themselves from the wood eastwards to inhabited parts. There they got their wounds bound. Procuring companions, they made their way to the earl, and told him of their misadventure. They told how both the Ulfs had fallen, twenty-five men were dead, and but five escaped with life, and they all wounded and bruised. The earl then asked what were the tidings of Egil and his comrades. They answered : 'We know not for sure how much they were wounded ; but full boldly did they set on us when we were eight and they four ; then we fled. Five reached the wood, but three perished : yet, for all we could see, Egil and his men were as fresh as ever.'

The earl said that their journey had been as bad as could be. 'I could have been content we should have great loss of life, had ye but slain these Northmen ; but now when they come west from the wood and tell these tidings to Norway's king, then may we expect from him the very hardest terms.'



CHAPTER LXXIX.

Egil comes to Thorfinn's. The harrying of king Hacon.

EGIL travelled on till he came westward out of the wood. They made for Thorfinn's that evening, where they were well received : their wounds were bound up, and they stayed there several nights. Helga, the

master's daughter, was now on her feet, and whole of her ailment. For this she and all the family thanked Egil. He, and his rested there themselves and their beasts.

The man who had graved the runes for Helga dwelt not far off. It now came out that he had asked her to wife, but Thorfinn would not give her. Then this landowner's son would fain beguile her, but she would not consent. So he thought to grave for her love-runes, but he did not understand them aright, and graved that wherefrom she took her sickness.

And when Egil was ready to depart, Thorfinn and his son escorted them on the road : they being thus ten or twelve in company. They went with them all that day as a guard against Armod and his house-carles. But when the tidings were heard how Egil's band had fought against overwhelming odds in the wood and conquered, then Armod thought it hopeless to raise shield against Egil : wherefore he with all his men sat at home. Egil and Thorfinn exchanged gifts at parting, and pledged themselves to friendship. Then Egil and his men went their way, and no tidings are told of their journey before they came to Thorstein's.

There their wounds were healed. Egil stayed there till spring. But Thorstein sent messengers to king Hacon to bring him the tribute for which Egil had gone to Vermland. Who, when they came before the king, told him the tidings of what had been done in Egil's journey, and brought him the tribute. The king was now sure that what he had before suspected was true, namely, that earl Arnvid had caused the slaying of the two companies of messengers sent eastwards by him. The king said that Thorstein should have leave to dwell in the land, and should be reconciled to him. Then the messengers returned home ; and on coming to Thorstein's told him that the king was well pleased with this Vermland journey, and that Thorstein was now to have reconciliation and friendship with the king.

King Hacon in the summer went eastwards to Vik : whence he journeyed still eastwards to Vermland with a large force. Earl Arnvid fled away ; but the king took large fines from those landowners whom he thought guilty against him according to the report of those who went after the

tribute. He set over the land another earl, taking hostages of him and of the landowners. In this expedition Hacon went far and wide about western Gautland and subdued it, as is told in his Saga, and is found in the poems composed about him. It is also told that he went to Denmark, and harried there far and wide. Then was it that with two ships he disabled twelve ships of the Danes, and gave to Tryggva, son of his brother Olaf, the name of king and the rule over Vik eastwards.

Egil in the summer made ready his merchant-ship and got thereto a crew. But the long-ship that he had brought from Denmark in the autumn he gave to Thorstein at parting. Thorstein gave Egil good gifts, and they pledged them to close friendship. Egil sent messengers to Thord, his wife's kinsman, at Aurland, and gave him charge to arrange for those lands that Egil owned in Sogn and Hordaland, bidding him sell them if there were a buyer. And when Egil was ready for his voyage, they sailed out along the bay, and then northwards along the Norway coast, and afterwards out into the main. They had a fairly good breeze, and came from the main into Borgarfirth; and Egil steered his ship up the firth to the haven close to his own house. He had his cargo conveyed home, and his ship set up on wooden props. Egil went home to his house: fain were folk to see him; and there he stayed for that winter.



CHAPTER LXXX.

Of the marriages of Egil's daughters.

BY the time that Egil came out to Iceland from this journey, the whole district was settled. All the original land-takers were dead, but their sons or sons' sons were living, and dwelt there in the district. There was a man named Grim, son of Sverting; he dwelt at Moss-fell below the heath; rich was he and of good family; his sister was Rannveig whom Thorod, the priest in Olvos, had to wife; their son was Skapti the lawman. Grim was also afterwards lawman. He asked to wife Thordis daughter of Thorolf Egil's brother, and stepdaughter of Egil. Egil

loved Thordis no whit less than his own children. She was a very beautiful woman. And since Egil knew that Grim was a wealthy man and the match was a good one, it was so settled, and Thordis was given to Grim. Then Egil paid over to her her father's heritage, and she went home with Grim, and the pair dwelt long at Moss-fell.

There was a man named Olaf, son of Hauskuld Dalekoll's son and Melkorka daughter of Myrkjartan king of the Irish. Olaf dwelt at Hjardarholt in Lax-river-dale, westward in Broad-firth dales. Olaf was very wealthy, the handsomest man in Iceland of his time, of a noble character. He asked to wife Thorgerdr, Egil's daughter. Thorgerdr was comely, tall above woman's wont, wise, rather proud-spirited, but in daily life gentle. Egil was well acquainted with Olaf, and knew that the match was a worthy one, wherefore Thorgerdr was given to Olaf. She went home with him to Hjardarholt.

Auzur, Eyvind's son, brother of Thorod in Olvos, had to wife Egil's daughter Bera.



CHAPTER LXXXI.

Death of Bodvar: Egil's poem thereon.

BODVAR Egil's son was just now growing up; he was a youth of great promise, handsome, tall and strong as had been Egil or Thorolf at his age. Egil loved him dearly, and Bodvar was very fond of his father. One summer it happened that there was a ship in White-river, and a great fair was held there. Egil had there bought much wood, which he was having conveyed home by water: for this his house-carles went, taking with them an eight-oared boat belonging to Egil. It chanced one time that Bodvar begged to go with them, and they allowed him so to do. So he went into the field with the house-carles. They were six in all on the eight-oared boat. And when they had to go out again, high-water was late in the day, and, as they must needs wait for the turn of tide, they did not start till late in the evening. Then came on a violent south-west gale, against which ran the stream of the ebb. This made a

rough sea in the firth, as can often happen. The end was that the boat sank under them, and all were lost. The next day the bodies were cast up: Bodvar's body came on shore at Einars-ness, but some came in on the south shore of the firth, whither also the boat was driven, being found far in near Reykjarhamar.

Egil heard these tidings that same day, and at once rode to seek the bodies: he found Bodvar's, took it up and set it on his knees, and rode with it out to Digras-ness, to Skallagrim's mound. Then he had the mound opened, and laid Bodvar down there by Skallagrim. After which the mound was closed again; this task was not finished till about night-fall. Egil then rode home to Borg, and, when he came home, he went at once to the locked bed-closet in which he was wont to sleep. He lay down, and shut himself in, none daring to crave speech of him.

It is said that when they laid Bodvar in earth Egil was thus dressed: his hose were tight-fitting to his legs, he wore a red kirtle of fustian, closely-fitting, and laced at the sides: but they say that his muscles so swelled with his exertion that the kirtle was rent off him, as were also the hose.

On the next day Egil still did not open the bed-closet: he had no meat or drink: there he lay for that day and the following night, no man daring to speak with him. But on the third morning, as soon as it was light, Asgerdr had a man set on horseback, who rode as hard as he could westwards to Hjardarholt, and told Thorgerdr all these tidings; it was about nones when he got there. He said also that Asgerdr had sent her word to come without delay southwards to Borg. Thorgerdr at once bade them saddle her a horse, and two men attended her. They rode that evening and through the night till they came to Borg. Thorgerdr went at once into the hall. Asgerdr greeted her, and asked whether they had eaten supper. Thorgerdr said aloud, 'No supper have I had, and none will I have till I sup with Freyja. I can do no better than does my father: I will not overlive my father and brother.' She then went to the bed-closet and called, 'Father, open the door! I will that we both travel the same road.' Egil undid the lock. Thorgerdr stepped up into the bed-closet, and locked the door again, and lay down on another bed that was there.

Then said Egil, 'You do well, daughter, in that you will follow your father. Great love have you shown to me. What hope is there that I shall wish to live with this grief?' After this they were silent awhile. Then Egil spoke: 'What is it now, daughter? You are chewing something, are you not?' 'I am chewing samphire,' said she, 'because I think it will do me harm. Otherwise I think I may live too long.' 'Is samphire bad for man?' said Egil. 'Very bad,' said she; 'will you eat some?' 'Why should I not?' said he. A little while after she called and bade them give her drink. Water was brought to her. Then said Egil, 'This comes of eating samphire, one ever thirsts the more.' 'Would you like a drink, father?' said she. He took and swallowed the liquid in a deep draught: it was in a horn. Then said Thorgerdr: 'Now are we deceived; this is milk.' Whereat Egil bit a sherd out of the horn, all that his teeth gripped, and cast the horn down.

Then spoke Thorgerdr: 'What counsel shall we take now? This our purpose is defeated. Now I would fain, father, that we should lengthen our lives, so that you may compose a funeral poem on Bodvar, and I will grave it on a wooden roller; after that we can die, if we like. Hardly, I think, can Thorstein your son compose a poem on Bodvar; but it were unseemly that he should not have funeral rites. Though I do not think that we two shall sit at the drinking when the funeral feast is held.' Egil said that it was not to be expected that he could now compose, though he were to attempt it. 'However, I will try this,' said he.

Egil had had another son named Gunnar, who had died a short time before.

So then Egil began the poem, and this is the beginning.

SONA-TORREK (SONS' LOSS).

1.

'Much doth it task me
My tongue to move,
Through my throat to utter
The breath of song.
Poesy, prize of Odin,
Promise now I may not,
A draught drawn not lightly
From deep thought's dwelling.

2.

'Forth it flows but hardly;
For within my breast
Heavy sobbing stifles
Hindered stream of song—
Blessèd boon to mortals
Brought from Odin's kin,
Goodly treasure, stolen
From Giant-land of yore.

3.

' He, who so blameless
Bore him in life,
O'erborne by billows
With boat was whelmed.
Sea-waves—flood that whilom
Welled from giant's wound—
Smite upon the grave-gate
Of my sire and son.

4.

' Dwindling now my kindred
Draw near to their end,
Ev'n as forest-saplings
Felled or tempest-strown.
Not gay or gladsome
Goes he who beareth
Body of kinsman
On funeral bier.

5.

' Of father fallen
First I may tell ;
Of much-loved mother
Must mourn the loss.
Sad store hath memory
For minstrel skill,
A wood to bloom leafy
With words of song.

6.

' Most woful the breach,
Where the wave in-brake
On the fenced hold
Of my father's kin.
Unfilled, as I wot,
And open doth stand
The gap of son rent
By the greedy surge.

7.

' Me Ran, the sea-queen,
Roughly hath shaken :
I stand of beloved ones
Stript and all bare.
Cut hath the billow
The cord of my kin,
Strand of mine own twisting
So stout and strong.

8.

' Sure, if sword could venge
Such cruel wrong,
Evil times would wait
Ægir, ocean-god.
That wind-giant's brother
Were I strong to slay,
'Gainst him and his sea-brood
Battling would I go.

9.

' But I in no wise
Boast, as I ween,
Strength that may strive
With the stout ships' Bane.
For to eyes of all
Easy now 'tis seen
How the old man's lot
Helpless is and lone.

10.

' Me hath the main
Of much bereaved ;
Dire is the tale,
The deaths of kin :
Since he the shelter
And shield of my house
Hied him from life
To heaven's glad realm.

11.

' Full surely I know,
In my son was waxing
The stuff and the strength
Of a stout-limbed wight :
Had he reached but ripeness
To raise his shield,
And Odin laid hand
On his liegeman true.

12.

' Willing he followed
His father's word,
Though all opposing
Should thwart my rede :
He in mine household
Mine honour upheld,
Of my power and rule
The prop and the stay.

13.

' Oft to my mind
My loss doth come,
How I brotherless bide
Bereaved and lone.
Thereon I bethink me,
When thickens the fight
Thereon with much searching
My soul doth muse :

14.

' Who staunch stands by me
In stress of fight,
Shoulder to shoulder,
Side by side?
Such want doth weaken
In war's dread hour ;
Weak-winged I fly,
Whom friends all fail.

15.

' Son's place to his sire
(Saith a proverb true)
Another son born
Alone can fill.
Of kinsmen none
(Though ne'er so kind)
To brother can stand
In brother's stead.

16.

' O'er all our ice-fields,
Our northern snows,
Few now I find
Faithful and true.
Dark deeds men love,
Doom death to their kin,
A brother's body
Barter for gold.

17.

' Unpleasing to me
Our people's mood,
Each seeking his own
In selfish peace.
To the happier bees' home
Hath passed my son,
My good wife's child
To his glorious kin.

18.

' Odin, mighty monarch,
Of minstrel mead the lord,
On me a heavy hand
Harmful doth lay.
Gloomy in unrest
Ever I grieve,
Sinks my drooping brow,
Seat of sight and thought.

19.

' Fierce fire of sickness
First from my home
Swept off a son
With savage blow :
One who was heedful,
Harmless, I wot,
In deeds unblemished,
In words unblamed.

20.

' Still do I mind me,
When the Friend of men
High uplifted
To the home of gods
That sapling stout
Of his father's stem,
Of my true wife born
A branch so fair.

21.

' Once bare I goodwill
To the great spear-lord,
Him trusty and true
I trowed for friend :
Ere the giver of conquest,
The car-borne god,
Broke faith and friendship
False in my need.

22.

' Now victim and worship
To Vilir's brother,
The god once honoured,
I give no more.
Yet the friend of Mimir
On me hath bestowed
Some boot for bale,
If all boons I tell.

.23.

'Yea he, the wolf-tamer,
The war-god skilful,
Gave poesy faultless
To fill my soul :
Gave wit to know well
Each wily trickster,
And force him to face me
As foeman in fight.

.24.

'Hard am I beset ;
Whom Hela, the sister
Of Odin's fell captive,
On Digræ-ness waits.
Yet shall I gladly
With right good welcome
Dauntless in bearing
Her death-blow bide.'

Egil began to cheer up as the composing of the poem went on ; and when the poem was complete, he brought it before Asgerdr and Thorerdr and his family. He rose from his bed, and took his place in the high-seat. This poem he called 'Loss of Sons.' And now Egil had the funeral feast of his son held after ancient custom. But when Thorerdr went home, Egil enriched her with good gifts.



CHAPTER LXXXII.

Hacon's wars and death. Poem on Arinbjorn.

LONG time did Egil dwell at Borg, and became an old man. But it is not told that he had lawsuits with any here in the land ; nor is there a word of single combats, or war and slaughter of his after he settled down here in Iceland. They say that Egil never went abroad out of Iceland after the events already related. And for this the main cause was that Egil might not be in Norway, by reason of the charges which (as has been told before) the kings there deemed they had against him. He kept house in munificent style, for there was no lack of money, and his disposition led him to munificence.

King Hacon, Athelstan's foster-son, long ruled over Norway ; but in the latter part of his life Eric's sons came to Norway and strove with him for the kingdom ; and they had battles together, wherein Hacon ever won the victory. The last battle was fought in Hordaland, on Stord-island, at Fitjar : there king Hacon won the victory, but also got his death-wound. After that Eric's sons took the kingdom in Norway.

Lord Arinbjorn was with Harold Eric's son, and was made his counsellor, and had of him great honours: He was commander of his forces and defender of the land. A great warrior was Arinbjorn, and a victorious. He was governor of the Firth folk. Egil Skallagrimsson heard these tidings of the change of kings in Norway, and therewith how Arinbjorn had returned to his estates in Norway, and was there in great honour. Then Egil composed a poem about Arinbjorn, whereof this is the beginning:

ARINBJORN'S EPIC, OR A PART THEREOF.

1.

'For generous prince
Swift praise I find,
But stint my words
To stingy churl.
Openly sing I
Of king's true deeds,
But silence keep
On slander's lies.'

2.

'For fabling braggarts
Full am I of scorn,
But willing speak I
Of worthy friends :
Courts I of monarchs
A many have sought,
A gallant minstrel
Of guileless mood.'

3.

'Erewhile the anger
Of Yngling's son
I bore, prince royal
Of race divine.
With hood of daring
O'er dark locks drawn
A lord right noble
I rode to seek.'

4.

'There sate in might
The monarch strong,
With helm of terror
High-throned and dread ;
A king unbending
With bloody blade
Within York city
Wielded he power.'

5.

'That moon-like brightness
Might none behold,
Nor brook undaunted
Great Eric's brow :
As fiery serpent
His flashing eyes
Shot starry radiance
Stern and keen.'

6.

'Yet I to this ruler
Of fishful seas
My bolster-mate's ransom
Made bold to bear,
Of Odin's goblet
O'erflowing dew
Each listening ear-mouth
Eagerly drank.'

7.

'Not beauteous in seeming
My bardic fee
To ranks of heroes
In royal hall :
When I my hood-knoll
Wolf-gray of hue
For mead of Odin
From monarch gat.'

8.

'Thankful I took it,
And therewithal
The pit-holes black
Of my beetling brows ;
Yea and that mouth
That for me bare
The poem of praise
To princely knees.'

9.

'Tooth-fence took I,
And tongue likewise,
Ears' sounding chambers
And sheltering eaves.
And better deemed I
Than brightest gold
The gift then given
By glorious king.

10.

'There a staunch stay
Stood by my side,
One man worth many
Of meaner wights,
Mine own true friend
Whom trusty I found,
High-couraged ever
In counsels bold.

11.

'Arinbjorn
Alone us saved—
Foremost of champions—
From fury of king ;
Friend of the monarch
He framed no lies
Within that palace
Of warlike prince.

12.

'Of the stay of our house
Still spake he truth,
(While much he honoured
My hero-deeds)
Of the son of Kveldulf,
Whom fair-haired king
Slew for a slander,
But honoured slain.

13.

'Wrong were it if he
Who wrought me good,
Gold-spender lavish,
Such gifts had cast
To the wasteful tract
Of the wild sea-mew,
To the surge rough-ridden
By sea-kings' steeds.

14.

'False to my friend
Were I fairly called,
An untrue steward
Of Odin's cup ;
Of praise unworthy,
Pledge-breaker vile,
If I for such good
Gave nought again.

15.

'Now better seeth
The bard to climb
With feet poetic
The frowning steep,
And set forth open
In sight of all
The laud and honour
Of high-born chief.

16.

'Now shall my voice-plane
Shape into song
Virtues full many
Of valiant friend.
Ready on tongue
Twofold they lie,
Yea, threefold praises
Of Thorir's son.

17.

'First tell I forth
What far is known,
Openly bruited
In ears of all ;
How generous of mood
Men deem this lord,
Bjorn of the hearth-fire
The birchwood's bane.

18.

'Folk bear witness
With wond'ring praise,
How to all guests
Good gifts he gives :
For Bjorn of the hearth-stone
Is blest with store
Freely and fully
By Frey and Njord.

19.

'To him, high scion
Of Hroald's tree,
Fulness of riches
Flowing hath come ;
And friends ride thither
In thronging crowd
By all wide ways
'Neath windy heaven.

20.

'Above his ears
Around his brow
A coronal fair,
As a king, he wore.
Beloved of gods,
Beloved of men,
The warrior's friend,
The weakling's aid.

21.

'That mark he hitteth
That most men miss ;
Though money they gather,
This many lack :
For few be the bounteous
And far between,
Nor easily shafted
Are all men's spears.

22.

'Out of the mansion
Of Arinbjorn,
When guested and rested
In generous wise,

None with hard jest,
None with rude jeer,
None with his axe-hand
Ungifted hied.

23.

'Hater of money
Is he of the Firths,
A foe to the gold-drops
Of Draupnir born.

24.

'Rings he scatters,
Riches he squanders,
Of avarice thievish
An enemy still.

25.

'Long course of life
His lot hath been,
By battles broken,
Bereft of peace.

26.

'Early waked I,
Words I gathered,
Toiled each morning
With speech-moulding tongue.
A proud pile built I
Of praise long-lasting
To stand unbroken
In Bragi's town.



CHAPTER LXXXIII.

Of Einar Helgi's son and Egil.

THERE was a man named Einar. He was the son of Helgi, the son of Ottar, the son of Bjorn Easterling, who took land in Broad-firth. Einar was brother of Osvif the seer. Einar at an early age was tall and strong, and most doughty. He began to compose poetry when quite young, and was eager for learning. One summer at the Thing Einar went to the booth of Egil Skallagrimsson,

and they began to talk, and soon their talk took this turn that they spoke of poetry. In this converse both of them found pleasure. After this Einar often went to talk with Egil, and a great friendship was struck up between them.

Einar had not long returned to Iceland from foreign travel. Egil asked Einar much of tidings from the east, and about his friends, and withal about those that he deemed his enemies. He asked also much about men of rank. Einar in turn asked Egil about the events that had happened in his travels, and about his exploits. This talk pleased Egil, and was kept up briskly. Einar asked Egil on what occasion his prowess had been most hardly tried; this he begged him to say. Egil then sang:

‘One with eight I battled,
Eleven faced I twice,
Made for wolf a meal,
Myself the bane of all.
Shields shook by sword-strokes
Smitten fast and furious;
Angry fire forth-flashing
Flew my ashen spear.’

Egil and Einar pledged them to friendship on parting. Einar was long abroad from Iceland with men of rank. Einar was open-handed, and often short of money, but noble-hearted and manly. He was in the body-guard of earl Hacon Sigurd's son. At that time there was in Norway much war, and battles between earl Hacon and Eric's sons; and now one, now the other, was driven from the land. King Harold, Eric's son, fell south in Denmark, at Hals in Lima-firth; this was by treachery. He was then fighting with Harold Knut's son, who was called Gold-Harold, and earl Hacon was there. There fell also with king Harold lord Arinbjorn, of whom much has already been told. And when Egil heard of the fall of Arinbjorn, then he sang:

‘Mead-givers, glorious men,
Gold-spending warrior wights
Are spent and gone. Where seek
Such lavish donors now?
Erewhile, beyond the sea,
Earth's islet-studded belt,
Such on my high hawk-perch
Hailed down the silver shower.’

Einar Helgi's son the poet was nicknamed Skala-glam. He composed a poem about earl Hacon, which is called 'Dearth of Gold'; and for a long time the earl would not hear the poem because he was wroth with Einar. Then Einar sang :

' Song made I on a chief
 Supreme o'er land enthroned ;
 While others slept, I wrought,
 Whereof I much repent.
 Hither the earl to seek
 Eager I came, nor thought
 From brave free-handed prince
 Far-comers worse would fare.'

And further he sang :

' Seek we that earl whose sword
 Spreads banquet for the wolf :
 To Sigvald's ship well-oared,
 Shield-fenced, my sword I lend.
 Wielder of wound-snake, he
 Will not my succour scorn :
 I to his sea-borne barque
 My buckler now will bear.'

The earl did not wish Einar to go away ; so he granted a hearing to the poem, and thereafter gave Einar a shield, which was a most costly work. It was inscribed with old tales ; and between the writing were overlaid spangles of gold with precious stones set therein. Einar went to Iceland and lodged with his brother Osvif : but in autumn he rode east and came to Borg, and was guest there. Egil was just then not at home, having gone to the northern part of the district, but was expected home. Einar waited for him three nights : longer than three nights it was not the custom to stay on a friendly visit. Then Einar made him ready to go ; but when ready he went to Egil's place in the hall, and there he hung up that precious shield, and told the house-carles that he left it a gift for Egil. Then he rode away.

But on that same day Egil came home. And when he came in to his place, then he saw the shield, and asked whose was that costly work. It was told him that Einar Skala-glam had come there, and had left the shield as a gift for him. Then said Egil : ' The wretched man, to give it ! He means that I should bide awake and compose poetry

about his shield. Now, bring my horse. I must ride after him and slay him.' He was told that Einar had ridden away early in the morning. 'He will,' they said, 'by this be come westwards to the dales.' Soon after Egil composed a poem, whereof this is the beginning :

‘Of shield, the ship’s bright guard,
To show the praise ‘tis time,
Home to my hand is given
The treasure-sender’s gift.
Surely hath Skala-glam
To skilful guidance lent
(Speak, ye who list my lay)
The reins of minstrel lore.’

Egil and Einar remained friends so long as they both lived. But about the shield’s fortune at last this is told, that Egil took it with him to the wedding when he went north to Broadmoor with Thorkettle Gunnvald’s son and Red-Bjorn’s sons Trefill and Helgi. There the shield was spoilt by falling into a tub of sour whey. After this Egil had the outer ornaments taken off: and there were twelve ounces of gold in the spangles.



CHAPTER LXXXIV.

Of Thorstein Egil’s son.

THORSTEIN Egil’s son when he grew up was a most handsome man, white-haired, bright-faced. Tall he was and strong, yet not so much so as his father. Thorstein was wise, gentle, quiet of temper, calm above other men. Egil loved him little; nor was Thorstein affectionate with his father; but Asgerdr and Thorstein loved each other dearly. Egil was now beginning to age much.

One summer Thorstein rode to the Thing, but Egil sat at home. Before Thorstein left home he and Asgerdr managed to take from Egil’s chest without his knowledge the silken robe given him by Arinbjorn, and Thorstein took it to the Thing. But when he wore it at the Thing it trailed behind him, and became soiled at the hem as they were going to the hill of laws. And when he came home, Asgerdr put the robe in the chest where it was before. Long after, when

Egil opened his chest, he found that the robe was spoilt, and questioned Asgerdr how that had come about. She told him the truth. Then Egil sang :

‘Him who from me inherits
I hold no worthy heir.
A son deceives me living,
Deceit I call his deed.
Well might he, wave-horse-rider,
Wait but awhile, till me
Sea-skimming shipmen cover
With shroud of piled stones.’

Thorstein married Jofridr, daughter of Gunnar son of Hlif : her mother was Helga daughter of Olaf Feilan, sister of Thord Gellir. Jofridr had before been wife of Thorod the son of Tongue-Odd.

Soon after this Asgerdr died. After her death Egil gave up his housekeeping to Thorstein, and went south to Mossfell to Grim, his son-in-law, for he loved Thordis his step-daughter most of all who were then living. One summer a ship came out and put into Loam Bay, steered by a man named Thormod. He was a Norwegian, a house-carle of Thorstein Thora's son. He was to take with him a shield, which Thorstein had sent to Egil Skallagrimsson : it was a valuable treasure. Thormod brought Egil the shield, and he received it with thanks. In the following winter Egil composed a poem about the gift of the shield : it is called Buckler-poem, and this is the beginning :

‘List to the stream of lay
From long-haired Odin flowing,
Thane of a king, and bid
Thy folk due silence keep.
For thee, sea-raven's ruler,
Rained from the eagle's beak
Full oft shall shower of song
In Horda's shore be heard.’

Thorstein Egil's son dwelt at Borg. He had two illegitimate sons, Hrifla and Hrafn. But after his marriage he and Jofridr had ten children. Helga the fair was their daughter, she about whom quarrelled Skald-Hrafn and Gunnlaug Wormstongue. Grim was their eldest son, the second Skuli, the third Thorgeir, the fourth Kollsvein, the fifth Hjorleif, the sixth Hall, the seventh Egil, the eighth

Thord. The other daughter was Thora, who was married to Thormod Kleppjarn's son. From Thorstein's children sprang a large progeny, and many great men. They are called Myra-men, all those that sprang from Skallagrim.



CHAPTER LXXXV.

Of Aunund Sjoni and Steinar his son.

AUNUND SJONI dwelt at Anabrekka, while Egil dwelt at Borg. Aunund married Thorgerdr daughter of Thorbjorn the Stout, of Snæfell-strand : the children of Aunund and his wife were a son Steinar, and a daughter Dalla. And when Aunund grew old and his sight was dim, then he gave up the housekeeping to Steinar his son. Father and son had much wealth.

Steinar was above other men tall and strong, ill-favoured, with a stoop, long in the legs, short in the body. He was a very quarrelsome man, vehement, overbearing, and obstinate, a most headstrong fellow. And when Thorstein Egil's son came to dwell at Borg, there was at once a coolness between him and Steinar. South of Hafs-brook lies a moor called Stack-moor. In winter this is under water, but in spring, when the ice breaks up, such good grazing for cattle is there, that it was deemed equal to stacked hay. Hafs-brook by old custom marked the boundary ; but in spring Steinar's cattle encroached much on Stack-moor, when driven out to Hafs-brook, and Thorstein's house-carles complained of it. Steinar took no notice of this ; and so matters went on for the first summer without anything happening. But in the second spring Steinar continued to take the pasturage ; wherefore Thorstein spoke with him about it, but quietly, asking him to control the grazing of his kine, as had been the old usage. Steinar said the cattle should go where they would. He spoke on the whole matter with obstinacy, and he and Thorstein had words about it. Thorstein then had the cattle turned back to the moor beyond Hafs-brook. This when Steinar knew, he charged Grani his thrall to sit by the cattle on Stack-moor, and he sat there every day. This was in the latter part of the summer : all the pasture south of Hafs-brook had been grazed by then.

Now it happened one day that Thorstein had mounted a knoll to look round. He saw where Steinar's cattle were moving. Out he went on to the moor: it was late in the day. He saw that the cattle had now come far out on the fenny hollow. Thorstein ran out on the moor. And when Grani saw that, he drove the cattle away apace till they came to the milking-shed. Thorstein followed, and he and Grani met in the gate. Thorstein slew him there: and it has been called since Grani's gate: it is in the wall of the enclosure. Thorstein pulled down the wall over Grani, and so covered his body. Then he went home to Borg, but the women who came to the milking-shed found Grani where he lay. After that they carried him home to the house, and told Steinar these tidings. Steinar buried him up on the hillside, and soon got another thrall to go with the cattle, whose name is not told. Thorstein made as though he knew nothing about the pasture for the remainder of the summer.

It now happened that Steinar in the early part of the winter went out to Snæfell-strand and stayed there awhile. There he saw a thrall named Thrand, who was tall and strong above other men. Steinar, wishing to buy him, bid a large sum: but his owner valued him at three marks of silver, which was twice the price of a common thrall, and at this sum the bargain was made. Steinar took Thrand home with him, and when they came home, then spoke Steinar with Thrand: 'Now stand matters so that I will have work of you. But as all the work is already arranged, I will put on you a task of but little trouble: you shall sit by my cattle. I make a great point of their being well kept at pasture. I would have you go by no man's rule but your own, take them wherever the pasture on the moor is best. I am no judge of a man's look if you have not courage and strength enough to hold your own against any house-carle of Thorstein's.'

Steinar delivered into Thrand's hand a large axe, whose blade was an ell long, it was keen as a razor. 'This I think of you, Thrand,' said Steinar, 'that you would not regard the priesthood of Thorstein if ye two were face to face.' Thrand answered: 'No duty do I, as I deem, owe to Thor-

stein ; and methinks I understand what work you have laid before me. You think you risk little where I am ; and I believe I shall come well out of it if I and Thorstein try our strength together.'

After this Thrand took charge of the cattle. He understood, ere he had been long there, whither Steinar had had his cattle taken, and he sat by them on Stack-moor. When Thorstein was aware of this, he sent a house-carle to seek Thrand, bidding him tell Thrand the boundary between his land and Steinar's. When the house-carle came to Thrand, he told him his errand, and bade him take the cattle otherwhither, saying that the land on which they were belonged to Thorstein Egil's son. Thrand said, 'I care not a jot who owns the land ; I shall take the cattle where I think the pasture is best.' Then they parted : the house-carle went home and told him the thrall's answer. Thorstein let the matter rest, and Thrand took to sitting by the cattle night and day.



CHAPTER LXXXVI.

Slaying of Thrand.

ONE morning Thorstein rose with the sun, and went up on the hill. He saw where Steinar's cattle were. Then went Thorstein out on the moor till he came to the cattle. There stands a wood-clad rock by Hafs-brook : upon this Thrand was lying asleep, having put off his shoes. Thorstein mounted the rock : he had in his hand a small axe, and no other weapon. With the shaft of the axe he poked Thrand, and bade him wake. Up he jumped swiftly and suddenly, gripped his axe with both hands and raised it aloft, and asked Thorstein what he wanted. He replied, 'I wish to tell you that this land is mine ; yours is the pasture beyond the brook. It is no wonder if you do not yet know the landmarks here.' Said Thrand, 'It makes no odds to me who owns the land : I shall let the cattle be where they please.' 'Tis likely,' said Thorstein, 'that I shall wish myself, and not Steinar's thralls, to rule my own land.' Said Thrand, 'You are a far more

foolish man, Thorstein, than I judged you to be, if you will take night-quarters under my axe, and for this risk your honours. Methinks, from what I see, I have twice your strength ; nor lack I courage : better weaponed am I also than you.' Thorstein replied : 'That risk I shall run, if you do not as I say about the pasture. I hope that our good fortune may differ much, as does the justice of our cause.' Thrand said : 'Now shall you see, Thorstein, whether I at all fear your threats.' And with that Thrand sat down and tied on his shoe. But Thorstein raised his axe swiftly, and smote on Thrand's neck so that his head fell forward on his breast. Then Thorstein heaped some stones over him and covered his body, which done, he went home to Borg.

On that day Steinar's cattle were late in coming home ; and when there seemed no hope of their coming, Steinar took his horse and saddled it, and fully armed himself. He then rode to Borg. And when he came there he found men to speak to, and asked where Thorstein was. It was told him that he was sitting within. Then Steinar asked that he should come out ; he had (he said) an errand with him. Which when Thorstein heard, he took his weapons and went out to the door. Then he asked Steinar what was his errand. 'Have you slain Thrand my thrall ?' said Steinar. 'Truly I have,' said Thorstein ; 'you need not put that upon any other man.' 'Then I see,' said Steinar, 'that you mean to guard your land with the strong hand, since you have slain my two thralls : yet methinks this is no great exploit. Now will I offer you in this a far better choice, if you wish to guard your land by force : I shall not trust other men with the driving of my cattle, but be you sure of this, the cattle shall be on your land both night and day.' 'So it is,' said Thorstein, 'that I slew last summer your thrall, whom you set to feed the cattle on my land, but afterwards let you have the feed as you would up to the winter. Now have I slain another thrall of yours, for the same fault as the former. Again you shall have the feed from now through the summer, as you will. But next summer, if you feed on my land, and set men to drive your cattle thither, then will I go on slaying for you every man that tends them,

though it be yourself. I will act thus every summer while you hold to the manner of grazing that you have begun.'

Then Steinar rode away and home to Brekka. And a little while after Steinar rode up to Stafar-holt, where Einar then dwelt. He was a priest. Steinar asked his help, and offered him money. Einar said, 'You will gain little by my help, unless more men of honour back you in this cause.' After that Steinar rode up to Reykjar-dale to see Tongue-Odd, and asked his help and offered him money. Odd took the money, and promised his help; he was to strengthen Steinar to take the law of Thorstein. Then Steinar rode home.

But in the spring Odd and Einar went with Steinar on the journey of summons, taking a large company. Steinar summoned Thorstein for thrall-slaying, and claimed lesser outlawry as the penalty of each slaying. For this was the law, when thralls of anyone were slain, and the fine for the thrall was not brought to the owner before the third sunrise. But two charges of lesser outlawry were equivalent to one of full outlawry. Thorstein brought no counter-summons on any charge.

And soon after he sent men southwards to Ness, who came to Grim at Moss-fell and there told these tidings. Egil did not show much interest about it, but he quietly learned by questions what had passed between Thorstein and Steinar, as also about those who had strengthened Steinar in this cause. Then the messengers went home, and Thorstein appeared well pleased with their journey.

Thorstein Egil's son took a numerous company to the spring-tide Thing: he came there one night before other men, and they roofed their booths, he and the Thingmen who had booths there. And when they had made all arrangements, then Thorstein bade his Thingmen set to work, and they built there large booth-walls. Then he had roofed in a far larger booth than the others that were there. In this booth were no men.

Steinar rode to the Thing also with a numerous company, as did Tongue-Odd, and Einar from Stafar-holt; they roofed their booths. The Thing was a very full one. Men pleaded their causes. Thorstein offered no atonement for himself,

but to those who advised atonement made answer, that he meant to abide judgment. He said that he thought the cause with which Steinar came, about the slaying of his thralls, was little worth ; Steinar's thralls, he argued, had done enough to deserve death. Steinar was high and mighty about his cause : he had, as he thought, charges good in law, and helpers strong enough to win his rights. So he was most impetuous in his cause.

That day men went to the Thing-brink and spoke their pleadings ; but in the evening the judges were to go out to try suits. Thorstein was there with his train ; he had there chief authority as to the rules of the Thing, for so it had been while Egil held priesthood and headship. Both parties were fully armed.

And now it was seen from the Thing that a troop of men was riding down along Cleave-river with gleaming shields. And when they rode into the Thing, there rode foremost a man in a blue mantle. He had on his head a gilded helm, by his side a gold-decked shield, in his hand a barbed spear whose socket was overlaid with gold, and a sword at his girdle. Thither had come Egil Skallagrim's son with eighty men, all well-weaponed, as if arrayed for battle. A choice company it was : Egil had brought with him the best land-owners' sons from the southern Nesses, those whom he thought the most warlike. With this troop Egil rode to the booth which Thorstein had had roofed, a booth hitherto empty. They dismounted. And when Thorstein perceived his father's coming, he with all his troop went to meet him, and bade him welcome. Egil and his force had their travelling gear carried into the booth, and their horses turned out to pasture. This done, Egil and Thorstein with the whole troop went up to the Thing-brink, and sat them down where they were wont to sit.

Then Egil stood up and spoke with loud voice : 'Is Aunund Sjoni here on the Thing-brink ?' Aunund replied that he was there. And he said, 'I am glad, Egil, that you are come. This will set right all the dispute here between these men.' 'Is it by your counsel,' said Egil, 'that your son Steinar brings a charge against my son Thorstein, and has gathered much people to this end, to make Thorstein

an outcast?' 'Of this I am not the cause,' said Aunund, 'that they are quarrelling. I have spent many a word and begged Steinar to be reconciled with Thorstein; for in any case I would have spared your son Thorstein disgrace: and good cause for this is the loving friendship of old that has been between us two, Egil, since we grew up here as next-door neighbours.' 'It will soon be clear,' said Egil, 'whether you speak this as truth or vain words; though I think this latter can hardly be. I remember the days when either of us had deemed it incredible that one should be accusing the other, or that we should not control our sons from going on with such folly as I hear this is like to prove. To me this seems right counsel, while we both live and are so nearly concerned with their quarrel, that we take this cause into our own hands and quash it, and let not Tongue-Odd and Einar match our sons together like fighting horses. Let them henceforth find some other way than this of making money.'

Then stood up Aunund and spoke: 'Rightly say you, Egil; and it ill-beseems us to be at a Thing where our sons quarrel. Never shall that shame be ours, that we lacked the manhood to reconcile them. Now, Steinar, I will that you give this cause into my hands, and let me deal with it as I please.'

'I am not sure,' said Steinar, 'that I will so abandon my cause; for I have already sought me the help of great men. I will now only bring my cause to such an issue as shall content Odd and Einar.' Then Odd and Steinar talked together. Odd said, 'I will give you, Steinar, the help that I promised towards getting law, or for such issue of the cause as you may consent to accept. You will be mainly answerable for how your cause goes, if Egil is to be judge therein.'

Whereupon Aunund said: 'I need not leave this matter to the tongue of Odd. Of him I have had neither good nor bad; but Egil has done to me much that is very good. I trust him far more than others; and I shall have my way in this. It will be for your advantage not to have all of us on your hands. I have hitherto ruled for us both, and will do so still.' Steinar said, 'You are right eager about this cause, father; but I think we shall oft rue this.'

After this Steinar made over the cause to Aunund to

prosecute or compromise according to law. And no sooner had Aunund the management of this cause, than he went to seek the father and son, Thorstein and Egil. Then said Aunund: 'Now I will, Egil, that you alone shape and shear in this matter as you will, for I trust you best to deal with this my cause as with all others.'

Then Thorstein and Aunund took hands, and named them witnesses, declaring withal that Egil Skallagrimsson should alone judge this cause, as he would, without appeal, then and there at the Thing. And so ended this suit.

Now men went home to their booths. Thorstein had three oxen led to Egil's booth and slaughtered for the Thing banquet.

And when Tongue-Odd and Steinar came home to their booth, Odd said: 'Now have you, Steinar, and your father ruled the issue of your suit. I now declare myself free of debt to you, Steinar, in regard of that help which I promised you; for it was agreed between us that I should help you in carrying through your suit, or to such issue as should content you; free am I, I say, whatever may be the terms adjudged you by Egil.' Steinar said that Odd had helped him well and manfully, and their friendship should be closer than before. 'I pronounce you,' he said, 'free of debt to me in regard of that whereto you were bound.'

In the evening the judges went out; but nothing happened that needs to be told.



CHAPTER LXXXVII.

Of Egil and Aunund Sjoni.

THE next day Egil Skallagrimsson went to Thing-brink, and with him Thorstein and all their party. Thither came also Aunund and Steinar, Tongue-Odd and Einar, and company. And when the law pleadings were finished, then stood up Egil and spoke thus: 'Are Steinar and Aunund, father and son, present, so that they can hear my words?' Aunund answered that they were.

'Then will I,' said Egil, 'deliver my judgment between Steinar and Thorstein. I begin the cause with this: Grim my father came to this island, and took to him here all the

land of Myrar and the district round about, and chose him a homestead at Borg, and assigned a parcel of land thereto, but gave to his friends choice of land outside that same, in which they have since settled. To Ani he gave a homestead at Anabrekka, where Aunund and Steinar have hitherto dwelt. We all know this, Steinar, what are the landmarks between Borg and Anabrekka, that the chief one is Hafs-brook. Now therefore not from ignorance, Steinar, did you act in grazing on Thorstein's land, for you, Steinar, and you, Aunund, might know that Ani received the land of my father Grim: but you encroached on his land, thinking that he would be so degenerate as tamely to submit to your robbery. But Thorstein slew two thralls of yours. Now it is evident to all that these died for their ill-deeds, and are therefore unatonable, nay, even had they been free men, yet had they been unatonable, no fine could have been claimed for them. But as for you, Steinar, seeing that you devised to rob my son Thorstein of his property which he took with my authority, and I took by inheritance after my father, you shall therefore lose your land at Anabrekka, and have no payment for the same. And further, you shall have neither homestead nor lodgment here in the district south of Long-river. And you must quit Anabrekka before fitting days are past; else may you, immediately after fitting days, be slain with impunity by any who wish to help Thorstein, if you refuse to go away or break any of these terms that I have pronounced for you.'

But when Egil sat down, then Thorstein named witnesses to his decision.

Then spoke Aunund Sjoni: 'Twill be said, Egil, that this judgment which you have given and pronounced is very crooked. And what I have to say is this: hitherto I have done all I could to prevent strife, but henceforth I shall not spare to do what I can to harm Thorstein.' 'This I forebode,' said Egil, 'that the longer our quarrel lasts, the worse will be the fortune of you and your son. I thought you must have known, Aunund, that I have held mine own before men quite as great as are you and your son. But for Odd and Einar, who have so eagerly thrust themselves into this cause, they have reaped therefrom due honour.'

CHAPTER LXXXVIII.

Of Thorgeir.

THORGEIR BLUND was there at the Thing, Egil's sister's son ; he had given Thorstein much help in this suit. He begged father and son to give him some land out there on the Moors. Hitherto he had dwelt south of White-river below Blunds-water. Egil received the request well, and persuaded Thorstein to let him come thither. So they settled Thorgeir at Anabrekka, but Steinar moved house beyond Long-river and settled down at Leirubrook. But Egil rode home southwards to Ness, father and son parting on friendly terms.

There was a man with Thorstein named Iri, fleet of foot and keen of sight above others ; he was a foreigner, a freedman of Thorstein's, but he still had the care of his flocks, and especially to gather the wethers up to the fell in spring, and in autumn down to the fold. Now, after flitting days, Thorstein bade gather the wethers that had been left behind in spring, meaning to have them driven to the fell. Iri was there in the sheepfold, but Thorstein and his house-carles rode up to the fell, being eight in all. Thorstein was having a fence made across Grisar-tongue, between Long-water and Cleave-river ; at which many of his men were employed in the spring. After inspecting his house-carles' work here, Thorstein rode homewards. Now as he came over against the Thing-field, Iri came running to meet them, and said that he wished to speak to Thorstein alone. Thorstein bade his companions ride on while they spoke together. Iri said he had gone up to Einkunnir that day, and looked to the sheep. 'But I saw,' said he, 'in the wood above the winter road the gleam of twelve spears and some shields.' Then Thorstein said in a loud voice, so that his companions could hear : 'Why can he be in such a hurry to see me that I may not ride on my way home ? However Aulvald will think it strange that I refuse him the visit if he is sick.' Iri then ran up to the fell as fast as he could. Thorstein said to his companions : 'I think we must lengthen our way, for we must first ride south to Aulvaldstead. Aulvald sends me word I am to go to him. And he will

think it no more than a fair return for the ox that he gave me last autumn that I should go and see him, if he deems the matter important.' Whereupon Thorstein with his company rode south by the moor above Stangar-holt, and so on south to Gufa-river, and down along the river by the riding-path. And when they came down below the lake, they saw south of the river many cattle and a man with them. He was a house-carle of Aulvald's. Thorstein asked whether all was well there. He said that all was well, and that Aulvald was in the copse cutting wood. 'Then tell him,' said Thorstein, 'if he has an urgent errand with me, to come to Borg, for I will now ride home.' And so he did. It was afterwards learnt that Steinar, with eleven more, had lain in ambush at Einkunnir that same day. Thorstein made as though he had heard nought of it, and things remained quiet.



CHAPTER LXXXIX.

Thorstein goes to a feast.

HERE was a man named Thorgeir, a kinsman and friend of Thorstein: he dwelt then at Swan-ness. Thorgeir was wont to have a harvest feast every autumn. He went to Thorstein Egil's son and asked him to his house. Thorstein promised to come, and Thorgeir went home. But on the appointed day Thorstein made him ready to go: it wanted then four weeks of winter. With Thorstein went an Easterling, his guest, and two house-carles. There was a son of Thorstein named Grim, who was then ten years old; he too went with Thorstein, thus they were five in all. And they rode out to Foss, there they crossed Long-river, then out, as the road lay, to Aurrida-river. On the outer bank of that river Steinar was at work, and Aunund, and their house-carles. And when they perceived Thorstein they ran to their weapons, then pursued his party. On seeing Steinar's pursuit, these rode outside Long-holt. There is a hillock, high and bare of wood. Thorstein's party dismounted there, and climbed the hillock. Thorstein bade the boy Grim go into the wood, and not be present at the encounter. As soon as Steinar and his

company came to the hillock they set upon Thorstein's party, and there was a fight. There were in Steinar's band six grown men in all, and a seventh was Steinar's son, ten years old. This encounter was seen by those who were on the meadows from other farms, and they ran to part them. But by the time they were parted both Thorstein's house-carles had lost their lives, one house-carle of Steinar's had fallen, and several were wounded.

After they were parted Thorstein sought for Grim. And they found him sore wounded, while Steinar's son lay there by him dead. And when Thorstein leapt on his horse, then Steinar called after him, 'You run now, Thorstein the white.' Thorstein answered, 'You shall run further ere a week be out.'

Then Thorstein with his company rode out over the moor, taking with them the boy Grim. And when they came to the holt that is there, the boy died ; and they buried him there in the holt, called since Grimsholt. And the place where they fought is called Battle-hillock.

Thorstein rode to Swan-ness that evening, as he had intended, and sat there at the feast three nights, after which he made him ready to go home. Men offered to go with him, but he would not ; so he and his Easterling friend rode two together.

That same day Steinar, expecting that Thorstein would be riding home, rode out along the shore. But when he came to the dunes below Lamba-stead he lay in wait there. He had the sword named Skrymir, an excellent weapon. He stood there on the sandhill with drawn sword and eyes turned one way, for he saw Thorstein riding out on the sand. Lambi, who dwelt at Lamba-stead, saw what Steinar was doing. He left the house and went down the bank, and, when he came to Steinar, he gripped him behind between the shoulders. Steinar tried to shake him off, but Lambi held fast, and so they went from the sandhill on to the level, and just then Thorstein and his friend rode by on the path below. Steinar had ridden thither on his stallion, which was now galloping inwards along the seashore. Thorstein and his friend saw this, and wondered, for they had perceived nothing of Steinar's coming. Then Steinar turned to

regain the bank (for he saw not that Thorstein had ridden by). And as they came on the edge of the bank, Lambi suddenly threw Steinar from the sandhill down on to the flat sand, and himself ran home. As soon as he could get to his feet Steinar ran after Lambi. But when Lambi reached his house-door, he dashed in and slammed the door after him, Steinar aiming a blow after him so that the sword stuck in the wood of the door. There they parted, and Steinar went home.

But when Thorstein came home, he sent next day a house-carle out to Leiru-brook to bid Steinar move house beyond Borgar-hraun, else would he take advantage of this against Steinar when he had more power on his side, 'and you will then,' said he, 'have no choice of migration.' So Steinar prepared to go out to Snæfells-strand, and there he set up his household at a place called Ellida. And thus ended the dealings between him and Thorstein Egil's son.

Thorgeir Blund dwelt at Anabrekka. He proved a bad neighbour to Thorstein in every way that he could be so. On one occasion, when Egil and Thorstein met, they talked much about Thorgeir Blund their kinsman, and they both agreed about him. Then Egil sang :

'Steinar my word erewhile
Stript of his fruitful acres :
So did I hope to help
The heir of Geir and Kettle.
False, though he promised fair,
My sister's son hath failed me.
Blund now (whereat I wonder)
Withholds him not from ill.'

Thorgeir Blund left Anabrekka, and went south to Flokdale; for Thorstein saw he could not get on with him, and yet wished to be forbearing. Thorstein was a man with no trickery, just, and never aggressive on others, but he held his own if others attacked him. But it proved disastrous to most to match their force with him.

Odd was then head-man in Borgar-firth, south of White-river. He was temple-priest, and ruled over that temple, to which all paid tribute within Skards-heath.



CHAPTER XC.

Death of Egil Skallagrim's son.

EGIL Skallagrim's son now grew old, and in his old age became heavy in movement, and dull both in hearing and sight ; he became also stiff in the legs. Egil was at Moss-fell with Grim and Thordis. It happened one day that as Egil went out along the house-wall he stumbled and fell. Some women saw this, and laughed, saying : ' You are now quite gone, Egil, if you fall when alone.' Then said the master Grim, ' Women jeered at us less when we were younger.' Egil then sang :

' Old haltered horse I waver,
Bald-head I weakly fall :
Hollow my failing leg-bones,
The fount of hearing dry.'

Egil became quite blind. And it was so that one day, when the weather was cold, Egil went to the fire to warm himself. Whereupon the cook said that it was a great wonder, so mighty a man as Egil had been, that he should lie in their way so that they could not do their work. ' Be you civil,' said Egil, ' though I bask by the fire, and let us bear and forbear about place.' ' Stand you up,' said she, and go to your seat, and let us do our work.' Egil stood up, and went to his place and sang :

' Blind near the blaze I wander,
Beg of the fire-maid pardon,
Crave for a seat. Such sorrow
From sightless eyes I bear.
Yet England's mighty monarch
Me whilom greatly honoured :
And princes once with pleasure
The poet's accents heard.'

Again, once when Egil went to the fire to warm himself, a man asked him whether his feet were cold, and warned him not to put them too near the fire. ' That shall be so,' said Egil ; ' but 'tis not easy steering my feet now that I cannot see ; a very dismal thing is blindness.' Then Egil sang :

' Lonely I lie,
And think it long,
Carle worn with eld
From kings' courts exiled.'

Feet twain have I,
Frosty and cold,
Bedfellows needing
Blaze of fire.'

In the later days of Hacon the Great Egil Skallagrim's son was in his ninth decade of years, and save for his blindness was a hale and hearty man. One summer, when men made ready to go to the Thing, Egil asked Grim that he might ride with him to the Thing. Grim was slow to grant this. And when Grim and Thordis talked together, Grim told her what Egil had asked. 'I would like you,' said he, 'to find out what lies under this request.' Thordis then went to talk with Egil her uncle: it was Egil's chief pleasure to talk to her. And when she met him she asked: 'Is it true, uncle, that you wish to ride to the Thing? I want you to tell me what plan you have in this?' 'I will tell you,' said he, 'what I have thought of. I mean to take with me to the Thing two chests that king Athelstan gave me, each of which is full of English silver. I mean to have these chests carried to the Hill of Laws just when it is most crowded. Then I mean to sow broadcast the silver, and I shall be surprized if all share it fairly between them. Kicks, I fancy, there will be and blows; nay, it may end in a general fight of all the assembled Thing.' Thordis said: 'A famous plan, methinks, is this, and it will be remembered so long as Iceland is inhabited.'

After this Thordis went to speak with Grim and told him Egil's plan. 'That shall never be,' said he, 'that he carry this out, such monstrous folly.' And when Egil came to speak with Grim of their going to the Thing, Grim talked him out of it all; and Egil sat at home during the Thing. But he did not like it, and he wore a frowning look.

At Moss-fell were the summer-sheds of the milch kine, and during the Thing-time Thordis was at the sheds. It chanced one evening, when the household at Moss-fell were preparing to go to bed, that Egil called to him two thralls of Grim's. He bade them bring him a horse. 'I will go to the warm bath; and you shall go with me,' said he. And when Egil was ready, he went out, and he had with him his chests of silver. He mounted the horse. They then went down through the home paddock and under the slope there,

as men saw afterwards. But in the morning, when men rose, they saw Egil wandering about in the holt east of the farm, and leading the horse after him. They went to him, and brought him home. But neither thralls nor chests ever came back again, and many are the guesses as to where Egil hid his money. East of the farm at Moss-fell is a gill coming down from the fell : and it is noteworthy that in rapid thaws there was a great rush of water there, but after the water has fallen there have been found in the gill English pennies. Some guess that Egil must have hidden his money there. Below the farm enclosure at Moss-fell are bogs wide and very deep. Many feel sure that 'tis there Egil hid his money. And south of the river are hot springs, and hard by these large earthholes, and some men guess that Egil must have hidden his money there, because out that way cairn-fires were often seen to hover. Egil said that he had slain Grim's thralls, also that he had hidden the chests, but where he had hidden them he told no man.

In the autumn following Egil fell sick of the sickness whereof he died. When he was dead, then Grim had Egil dressed in goodly raiment, and carried down to Tjaldarness ; there a sepulchral mound was made, and in it was Egil laid with his weapons and his raiment.



CHAPTER XCI.

Grim takes the Christian faith.

GRIM of Moss-fell was baptized when Christianity was established by law in Iceland. He had a church built there, and 'tis common report that Thordis had Egil moved to the church. And this proof there is thereof, that later on, when a church was built at Moss-fell, and that church which Grim had built at Bush-bridge taken down, the churchyard was dug over, and under the altar-place were found human bones. They were much larger than the bones of other men. From the tales of old people it is thought pretty sure that these were Egil's bones. Skapti the priest, Thorarin's son, a wise man, was there at the time. He took then the skull of Egil, and set it on the churchyard fence. The skull was wondrous large, but still

more out of the common way was its heaviness. It was all wave-marked on the surface like a shell. Skapti then wished to try the thickness of the skull. He took a good-sized hand-axe, and brandishing it aloft in one hand, brought down the back of it with force on the skull to break it. But where the blow fell the bone whitened, but neither was dinted nor cracked. Whence it might be gathered that this skull could not easily be harmed by the blows of weak men while skin and flesh were on it. The bones of Egil were laid in the outer part of the churchyard a' Moss-fell.



CHAPTER XCII.

Of Thorstein's descendants.

THORSTEIN Egil's son received baptism when Christianity came to Iceland, and he had a church built at Borg. He was true to the faith, and a good man. He lived to be old, and died in his bed ; he was buried at Borg by the church which he had built.

From Thorstein have come numerous descendants ; many great men, many poets : they are of the stock of the Myra-men, as are all who sprang from Skallagrim. It long held good of that kin that the men were tall, and great warriors, some too were of prophetic sight. They were of two distinct types : for in that stock have been born the handsomest men in Iceland—such were Thorstein Egil's son, and Kjartan Olaf's son, sister's son of Thorstein, and Hall Gudmund's son, also Helga the fair, Thorstein's daughter (about whom Gunnlaug Worms-tongue and Skald-Raven quarrelled). But the more part of the Myra-men were very ill-favoured.

Of the brothers, sons of Thorstein, Thorgeir was the strongest, Skuli was the tallest. He dwelt at Borg after the days of Thorstein his father. Skuli was long time out free-booting. He was forecastleman of earl Eric on the Iron Ram when king Olaf Tryggvason fell. Skuli was in seven battles, and was deemed a great warrior and a brave. He afterwards came out to Iceland, settled in the house at Borg, and dwelt there till old age ; many have been his descendants. And so ends this story.

NOTES.

CH. I.—*shapestrong*] Men were so called who had fits of superhuman rage and strength: in which they were even believed to take the shape of brutes. In this Saga Kveldulf has such an access of fury in ch. xxvii., Skallagrim in ch. xl. See on this subject Dasent's 'Burnt Njal,' Introd., p. xx. There is no change of shape in the 'hamrammir' men of our Saga: but Gunnhilda in ch. lxii. assumes a swallow's shape by witchcraft.

Kveldulf] That is 'evening-wolf': a wolf being the brute whose shape or temper he assumed.

CH. III.—*war-arrow*] This was sent round as a summons to war, like the Fiery Cross of the Scottish clans described in the 'Lady of the Lake.'

CH. IV.—*skald*] Bard or poet. Kings and chieftains kept such about them, 'poets-laureate.' Besides long poems, they supplied short staves on occasion, as we shall see abundantly in Egil's case.

Jamtaland, Helsingjaland] In Sweden. The words 'Normandy in France, the Faroe isles,' have been inadvertently omitted.

CH. VII.—*Hildirida's sons*] The cause of the after trouble to Kveldulf's house, when their claim is rejected: so that this account of Bjorgolf's second marriage is not superfluous.

CH. VIII.—*second highseat*] The seat of honour opposite the chief or master. Cf. 'Burnt Njal,' Intr. p. ciii.

CH. IX.—*Vik*] 'The Bay': that is to say, Skage-rack, Christiania-fjord and the adjacent coasts.

whom iron bit not! Curious ideas there were about iron not wounding certain men. We see them later on in the duel between Egil and Atli. It has been remarked that probably the Norsemen's weapons had not blades of steel generally. About Berserks Dasent's Introd. to 'Burnt Njal,' p. xxii., may be consulted. The origin of the name is very doubtful. That 'bare sark' is so seems improbable: no trace of 'bare-shirtedness' is there in the passages about them. Another derivation is from 'bear,' these men being supposed able to take a bear's shape. Later in this Saga Egil has a duel with a Berserk.

CH. XI.—*banquets*] 'veizlur': repeatedly used of the entertainments given to the king as he made a circuit through the provinces.

CH. XIV.—*Kiriales*] Or 'Careles.' The relative position of these peoples and countries is given a little further on.

CH. XVII.—*penny*] A borrowed word, used again of English silver coins in ch. lxxxix. During Saga times money was little used. Rings were broken off and given: worth was estimated by weight of metal: also 'wadmal,' a stuff or cloth, was a standard of value.

CH. XVIII.—*homes to be attacked*] 'Heimferd' here has a special sense, visitation of a house for seizure of property.

some . . . on land] That is, some landed before they came up to the ship, and went (unseen probably through brushwood) till they came opposite to it, then suddenly boarded it.

was no lie] No lie about the cargo being valuable, but how about its being rightfully the king's? Did Harold really believe the slander? And

was it altogether slander? To the latter question probably the answer is yes. For when years afterwards Arinbjorn speaks of Thorolf as 'slain by the slander of wicked men, and for no crime,' Eric does not gainsay him.

in partnership) The king had by his act declared open war against Thorolf: Thorolf therefore would play the same game and get what share he could.

CH. XIX.—*ice loosed*] Norsemen's movements depended on the seasons: in winter they 'sat at home.' In 'Head-ransom' st. i. Egil says he launched his bark *vid' isa brot*.

Eyrar] By meaning 'banks': but used especially of the shores about Copenhagen. *Eyrar-sund* 'the Sound.' The word is still seen in 'Elsinore.'

Elbe] Not the well-known river, but a Norwegian one.

CH. XX.—*like his father*] Kveldulf, Skallagrim, Egil were alike in much. Both the Thorolfs and probably Bodvar were of another type. 'Thorolf the elder, we are told, was like his mother's kin.' There continued to be these two types in Skallagrim's posterity. See ch. xcii. Kveldulf seems to have loved most the cheerful Thorolf, his opposite. And Skallagrim did not much love Egil, who was rather on his own pattern.

CH. XXI.—*sail and row* i.e., you will make double haste back. Harold says it with malicious humour.

two hundred men] One hundred to each ship seems to have been the usual complement. In next chapter one edition puts Harold's four hundred in four ships, though afterwards in six when the bonders' ships are used, which were perhaps smaller than the king's.

CH. XXII.—*brew the ale*] They brewed ale for each occasion, and drank it new. The original here has one word, '*farar-mungat*, journey-beer.'

shield-wall] 'Alfred . . . made his men hold close together with their shields' (Freeman). We constantly hear of this array. Ascer calls it a *testudo* or *tortoise*, the Roman term for the same or nearly the same array.

CH. XXIII.—*Kettle Hæing*] Dasent, p. xlivi. of Introd., gives the origin of the by-name 'Trout' of this Kettle. The elder Kettle Hæing was son of Hallbjorn Half-troll whose sister Hallbera was Kveldulf's mother. Therefore he was first cousin to Kveldulf. Hrafnilda was thus Thorolf's second cousin. But her son may not have been much older than Thorolf, as Kveldulf married rather late in life.

CH. XXIV.—*Thorolf in*] Jónsson thinks this verse not genuine.

such good fortune] He means that Harold himself will not fall. Nor did he.

CH. XXV.—A vigorous chapter is this: Skallagrim's character comes out. *coal-biter*] Explained by lexicon as 'an idle youth always sitting by the fire-side.' How one of Skallagrim's chosen twelve could be this is not clear.

Thorir Hroaldsson] This foster-brother of Skallagrim, we shall see, is of some importance in the story. The younger Thorolf comes to him afterwards, and marries his sister's daughter. And Egil becomes a fast friend of his son Arinbjorn.

CH. XXVII.—*shape-strength*] One of the chief passages about the fits of shape-strength, and the after weakness.

vengeance] This verse Jónsson rejects as spurious.

coffin] We are told that with these emigrants it was a custom to cast overboard the pillars of the high seat, and, wherever they drifted ashore, there to take land: Kveldulf's coffin is to be in the place of these.

Borgarhraun] 'Hraun' in Iceland is 'lava field': it enters into many local names: naturally so, looking to the character of the country.

Duck-kyle] 'Kyle' appears in the North of Scotland in many places of a

long inlet or estuary : *e.g.*, the Kyle of Sutherland, of Durness, Kyle-Akin, etc. *Anda*, 'of ducks': önd is Germ. *Ente*, Lat. *anas, anatis*.

CH. XXIX.—*many legs*] A quaint expression 'stód a mörgum fótum.' Skallagrim had 'many irons in the fire,' 'his eggs in more than one basket,' would be other proverbial equivalents.

CH. XXX.—*to the falls*] 'Foss.' 'Force' is still used in the North for waterfall. This Long-river foss is several times mentioned: the stream appears to have been navigable up to it.

Four men] Homer's Hector lifts a stone 'which not two men could bear'; Virgil's hero one big enough for 'twelve.'

this stave] Not genuine according to Jónsson.

CH. XXXI.—*sprinkled with water*] This is not Christian Baptism: which is expressed in Icelandic differently. To baptize is *skira* 'to purify': Baptism is *skirn*. Cf. ch. xcii., *Thorstein tók skirn*.

Egil] Two sisters were between Thorolf and Egil: Egil's birth is thought to have been at least ten years after Thorolfs. The date which is most certain, and from which the others are reckoned, is the year of Egil's return to Iceland after his service with Athelstan: this was 927. He had been out twelve years, therefore he and Thorolf went out in 915. A year before that Thorolf returned from his freebootings with Bjorn: and the year before that (913) Egil is said to have been twelve years old: thus his birth would fall in 901, in which year Jónsson puts it. Thorolf goes out with Bjorn in 903 or 904, soon after the feast at Yngvar's when Egil is said to have been three years old. Thorolf cannot well have been less than eighteen years old then, which would bring his birth to 886 or thereabouts. Skallagrim came to Iceland in 878, and had several children before Thorolf, none of whom lived. Suppose these to have numbered three or four, this would agree well enough with the date assigned for Thorolf's birth. But Egil's birth may have been two or three years earlier than 901. One authority puts it in 898. This would make Egil two or three years older at Yngvar's feast: and it is not unlikely that in telling of his childish exploits his precociousness came to be rather overstated. There seems nothing that can fix absolutely the date of Thorolf's first going out with Bjorn: but if Asgerdr (Thorolf's wife) was born (as is probable) about 900, Thorolf's first voyage falls in 903 or 904. He is said to have been 'abroad a long time,' which we may take to mean about ten years. Egil is said (ch. xc.) to have been in the eighties (upwards of eighty) in the last (or first) days of earl Hacon: *i.e.*, in 975-85 or 985-95. The reading is uncertain: see note on ch. xc.

draught horse] Or 'yoke-horse.' *Eykr* akin to *ok* 'yoke.' Cf. Gr. *ὑποζύγιον*.

Gold . . . guardeth] Gold is called the 'serpent's treasure' in allusion to the story of Fafnir in *Volsunga-Saga*. Cf. the golden apples of the Hesperides and their dragon. This and the next verse are not thought genuine.

dogs] Why? The lexicon says it is an allusion to Icelandic children's play, who put pebbles for animals.

CH. XXXII.—*Bjorn took Thora*] The abduction of Thora by Bjorn is something like that of Hildirida by Bjorgolf. And earl Atli disallows it as a marriage. But it was afterwards accepted and confirmed by Thorir, Thora's brother.

CH. XXXIII.—*they stood slant-wise*] Or 'beat up against the wind.' The Icel. word is 'beittu,' from *beita* 'to bite.' It is plainer to see what this means in nautical phraseology than why it means the same. The term is used when with a head or cross wind tacking is needed, when the ship does not run before, but advances across, or into the teeth of the wind, by slant-

ing the sail. Cf. Orkn. 356 *undu their segl sin ok beittu út*, 'they set their sails slantwise and beat out.' The phrase often occurs when capes have to be weathered on which the wind is blowing. E.g., in this Saga, ch. lxii., *fengu their beitt fyrir Skotland*, translated by Petersen 'de havde ondt nok med at krydse forbi kysten,' 'they had trouble enough to weather the coast.' The word 'krydse' is given in Danish dictionary 'to cross, to lay crosswise, to cruise, to laver.' We do not use 'cruise' now just in this sense; 'to laver' is (I suppose) the French *louvoyer* 'to tack.' Is it not possible that the English nautical 'beat' comes from the Iceland *beitia* 'to bite,' not from 'to beat' in the sense of 'strike'? If the head or nose (or mouth) of the ship points against, or partly against, the wind, the ship may be said to be 'biting' the wind.

CH. XXXVI.—*fostered*] A common practice was this, for a son of king or chief to be fostered away from home. Hacon, Eric's brother, was fostered in England with king Athelstan; a son of Eric was fostered with Arinbjorn. Why ever does Freeman (p. 159 of his small history) suppose that Hacon was fostered not with king Athelstan, but with Guthorm Athelstan of East Anglia, who died in 890 (Anglo-Saxon Chronicle)? His death surely falls before Hacon was born. For Eric Bloodaxe was born in or near 894, and Hacon was almost certainly younger. He goes from England to be king in Norway in 934, and dies, not an old man, in 960. This sending young princes or nobles abroad for part of their boyhood doubtless was on the principle that 'home-staying youths have ever homely wits.'

CH. XXXVII.—*Bjarmaland*] Eric's journey to Bjarmaland must have been later in date than it appears in the Saga. Probably it was in 919, as Jónsson puts it. This would be during Thorolf's second outing with Egil. Jónsson thinks it may be an error to make Thorolf accompany Eric at all on this journey. For Eric's meeting with Gunnhilda and her up-bringing among Finnish wizards, the curious may consult vol. ii. of 'Burnt Njal,' p. 378.

Bergonund] He marries Bjorn's second daughter, and he, and after him Atli, keep back property from Asgerdr, Egil's wife.

heathen worshipper] So were all in Norway and Iceland then. But Christianity was, as it were, throwing its shadow before: hence those prominent in heathen worship are noticed.

CH. XXXVIII.—*an axe*] Skallagrim puts this presentation axe to a hard test. Doubtless he was not inclined to receive favourably anything from the son of Harold his old foe.

'tis good] Best to leave off in time. The two proverbs both express much the same. Petersen gives for the second 'megeñ færd kan blive ukær,' which perhaps is meant to be a sort of rhyme: 'too much travel makes trouble.'

CH. XXXIX.—*Kettle Blund*] His grandson, Thorgeir Blund, comes into the story in ch. lxxxviii.

CH. XL.—*Ball-play*] There is a description of this in the story of Gisli, ch. viii.: but in spite of the details given, it is not easy to understand exactly the rules of the game. It was played on the ice in Gisli's story: the ball was large, for a blow with it knocked down Thorgrim; the players ran with the ball, and tried to prevent their adversaries from getting it; a bat was used for striking it. Sides were chosen; yet (we see from this Saga) that they were somehow matched in pairs, as in this chapter Egil against Grim. Some points the game has like Rugby football, some like hockey perhaps: Daseint pronounces it 'something between hockey and football.' Plainly it was a rough game, and led to excitement and sometimes quarrel.

father and son] Skallagrim and Egil were too much alike to bear and

forbear. Egil seems to have admired and liked his elder brother (just as Skallagrim did the elder Thorolf). Thorold did not, when Egil was a boy, return the affection : but they got on better together afterwards.

CH. XLII.—*Thorolf asks Agerdr*] This marriage probably is misplaced ; it appears here as in 915 : probably it was in 923, as also the slaying of Bard, etc.

CH. XLIV.—*False deceiver*] Egil's ire at stinginess and inhospitality is shown here, and again in his Vermland journey at Armod's, ch. lxxiv.

CH. XLV.—*Sheppey*] Sheep were kept on it, and visited now and again, as is done on small islands off the Scotch coast. The whole description of this island, with its overgrowth, brake, etc., is a vivid picture, and recalls several such places in the Scotch highlands.

CH. XLVI.—*the eastward way*] i.e., to the Baltic : Courland is at the east end of that sea.

CH. XLVIII.—*cast their lots*] *Skaut* may be either the skirt of a cloak, or a kerchief, in fact anything of a bag-like character : the earl then draws the lots out. In Homer lots are thrown into a helmet and shaken out.

why sittest] Jónsson disallows this stave, as also the other girl's stave later in the story. According to the Saga this Holland expedition seems to fall in 916 : but Jónsson thinks it may have been later.

CH. XLIX.—*Eyvind Skreyja*] He fell by king Hacon's hand in the battle at which Hacon received his death-wound in the year 960.

CH. L.—*Alfred*] The account given of England and its kings at that time is remarkably correct, considering that it was written by a foreigner some three hundred years after Alfred's time. The Saga-writer terms Alfred first of his family 'supreme king over England.' Historians count Egbert, his grandfather, to have been so in some sense : 'under Egbert,' says Freeman, 'the West Saxons became the chief people of Britain, and their kings became lords over all the princes of the island.' But the reigns that followed, of Ethelwulf and his elder sons, were so much troubled with wars, especially against the Danes, that none till Alfred earned permanently the claim to be regarded 'einvalds-konungr.' Alfred, after much fighting, well deserved the title. Alfred's reign, as the Saga says, was in the days of Harold Fairhair. Harold came to the throne in 860, and lived till 933 : but he made over part of his kingdom to his sons before his death.

Edward] King from 901-925. His reign, in which there was much fighting, was a prosperous one. The Danes were a large part of the population, and had an established power in the East and North-East : but they owned Edward as over-lord. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle for 924 says, 'In this year king Edward was chosen for father and for lord by the king of the Scots, and by the Scots, and by king Ragnald, and by all the Northumbrians, and also by the king of the Strathclyde Welsh, and by all the Strathclyde Welsh.'

Athelstan] Of this king we have now facts recorded in the Saga that are found nowhere else. But these seem very probable, and agree with what we know of Athelstan from other sources. He had, as our writer says, many brothers, and sisters too, 'most of whom became kings and queens' (Freeman).

a young king] Athelstan was thirty at his accession. That occasion would be taken by some to rebel, and that it was so, is plain enough ; but the Chronicle does not tell us much about this at the beginning of Athelstan's reign, only giving details of the great struggle at Brunanburh twelve years later.

Britons, Scots, and Irish] Britons : i.e., Welsh, either of Wales (as we use the word), or of Strathclyde. The English had to deal with both.

Perhaps the Strathclyde Welsh were the more likely to combine with the Scots. What Irish there were is hard to say. A Danish king, Anlaf, came from Ireland with many ships to help at Brunanburh in 937. Whether he or others had really Irish soldiers is uncertain. There had been intercourse between Ireland and Scotland long before this: Columba came over to Iona about 560; but there had been no claim of rule over Ireland by the English.

thoroughly Christian] Augustine was sent to England by Gregory in 596. With the battle of the Winwæd in 654 (says J. R. Green) 'all active resistance on the part of the older heathendom came to an end. Christianity . . . became the faith of the New England at large.'

the first signing] One among several passages in the Sagas about this practice. *Prim-signa*, to give the *prima signatio* or *signaculum crucis* preliminary to christening. The social advantages with the liberty of belief thereby ensured are naïvely described here. Also this 'prim-signing' gave a right to burial at the edge of churchyards where consecrated and unconsecrated ground meet. This we see in the case of Egil himself at the end of the Saga.

CH. LI.—*Olaf]* There were several of this name. Constantine was king of the Scots when Athelstan came to the throne, and had apparently long been so, as he is called 'hoary warrior' in the poem on Brunanburh. This Olaf Jónsson thinks was Constantine's son-in-law. An Olaf (or Anlaf) took part in the battle of Brunanburh, he was Danish, he came from Ireland, and he, as well as Constantine, escaped from the field: but a son of Constantine was slain. We cannot reasonably expect absolute accuracy about names and small details of earlier English and Scotch history in an Icelander writing near the end of the twelfth century.

Ragnar Lodbrok] A famous man of whom romantic stories are told. The Danish invasion in the middle of the seventh century is said to have been undertaken by his sons to avenge the fate of their father, cast by a Northumbrian king into a cave of vipers.

Danish] The Danes became masters of Northumbria and occupied it long before this. Palgrave names many towns which were called the 'Danish Burghs.' 'In these burghs there appears to have settled a large and effective population composed of the higher classes of the Danish warriors' (Palgrave's England, vol. i., p. 115). And later of the events, about 880, 'Halfdane completed his conquest by dividing great part of the Northumbrian territory amongst his followers, who, settling amongst the Angles, were at last so mixed with them as to form almost one people.'

Bretland . . . Hring . . . Adils] It is impossible to identify for certain these Welsh earls or kinglets. In 922 we read in Anglo-Saxon Chronicle 'the kings of the north Welsh Howel, Cledauc, and Jeothwel . . . sought him (Edward) for lord.' Palgrave writes 'Edwall' for the last of these three: 'Adils' is not unlike this.

now were disloyal] On the early events of Athelstan's reign the Chronicle is very brief. Indeed (if we except the poem on Brunanburh), there is on all Athelstan's reign but one (not very full) page in Thorpe's translation, as compared with ten full pages on Edward's reign. Of the year 926 we read: 'In this year fiery beams of light appeared in the north part of the sky. And Sihtric died, and king Athelstan assumed the kingdom of the Northumbrians; and he subjugated all the kings that were in this island: first Howel king of the West Welsh, and Constantine king of the Scots, and Owen king of Gwent, and Ealdred son of Ealdulf of Bamborough; and with pledge and with oaths they confirmed peace, in the place which is named Eamot (Emmet?), on the ivth of the Ides of July

(July 12th), and renounced every kind of idolatry ; and after that departed in peace.

Now, though nothing is said of any one great battle here, yet there may well have been one or more of some importance. Great expectations had been formed of Athelstan's prowess, and 'he engaged as soon as he was settled on the throne in a succession of warlike enterprises against the other nations who dwelt in Britain' (Palgrave). As Jónsson suggests, the 'fiery beams of light' may have been looked on as tokens of coming battles. 'Else' (as he says) 'their mention seems rather meaningless.' In some battle at this time Thorolf and Egil may have taken part. Athelstan would be glad of additional men at such a time ; and so naturally 'he received them well.' He had (Palgrave writes) at an early age 'sailed over the North Sea and visited the opposite shores of the Baltic. Here he became acquainted with the old Norsk tongue and acquired great fondness for the usages and customs of the Northmen.'

And now as to the exact position of Vin-heath, where the battle so minutely described in the Saga took place, we know it not : but neither do we know where Brunanburh was, further than that it was in North-umberland. A passage indeed is quoted by Jónsson and others from a Latin history by Simeon of Durham, in which it is said that Athelstan fought a battle against Olaf Constantine and the Cumbrians' king, '*apud Wendune*.' Here is a name in place of Brunanburh (if our battle be meant) which is something like *Vin-heidi* : the first part may be called the same : the second 'dune' or 'down' is much the same as heath. More exactly than this we shall never determine about Vin-heath : Thorold and Egil probably did take part in a real battle quite early in Athelstan's reign : but very likely the more important battle of Brunanburh some twelve years later eclipsed the former, and some particulars and names connected with the one have taken their place in the account of the other. The account of the battle of Vin-heath, if not in all details *vero*, is so *ben trovato* that we could ill spare it. There is nothing demonstrably untrue or unlikely about it. And (as Jónsson reminds us) an error or two in details of English history in no way impair the trustworthiness of the Saga for what concerns Norway and Iceland.

CH. LII.—[*enhazel*] The process is clearly explained further on : the lexicon refers to two other places that mention this curious kind of challenge to a pitched battle.

wait a week] Any way the battle was not to be till the week's end (from the date of the proposal) ; but supposing one side not to be on the field by then, the other side were to wait a week (from the time of their arrival on the field), and not harry.

wise men] One is rather led to understand that it was by Thorolf's and Egil's counsel that these delays had been secured.

CH. LIII.—[*high enough*] When the butt rested on the ground the socket was just at the convenient height for the hand to grasp, the hand being probably about level with the waist. The shaft may have been 'wrapped with iron' to balance the blade when the weapon was in use and held horizontally, or nearly so.

Earls-ness] Where ? In Wales, says Petersen : in England, says Jónsson. Any way on the west coast. Alfgeir must have gone southwards and round the Land's end, etc.

CH. LIV.—[*Scots . . . loose in array*] A truthful description of Scotch Highlanders' battle tactics for any time.

CH. LV.—[*Dauntless, etc.*] Jónsson doubts the genuineness of this verse. *Olaf, young prince*] Constantine the king of Scots was an old man (as we

have seen) at Brunanburh : and probably was not young even at Athelstan's accession. 'Young prince' would suit his son or son-in-law.

Egil was, etc.] A wonderfully drawn picture. The personal appearance of Egil is often recurred to. He himself speaks of his own uncomely face in Höfudlausn and in Arinbjorn's-drápa.

a ring] A ring worn on the arm, not a finger-ring, as is plain from the rest of the description.

two chests] Of these more anon in chs. lxi. and lxxxix.

Ella] Athelstan is looked upon as successor to Ella king of Northumbria long before. The 'reindeer trod hills' mean the Scotch mountains.

CH. LVI.—*unfriendly*] The translator does not pretend to have solved the riddle (if there be one) in this stave. Arinbjorn thinks a woman's name is hidden. Commentators think Asgerdr's name is hidden; but are not agreed how. Egil's next stave seems to make this doubtful. The gist of this first verse appears to be: 'There is a coolness between me and Asgerdr: I once so bold am reserved and sad.'

several winters] Probably from 927-932.

a swift cutter] The various Norse names for ships do not exactly correspond to the English. This appears to have been a light vessel built for speed, and not drawing much water: see ch. lviii., where it passes through a shallow sound.

Gula-Thing] This is mentioned in the Njal's Saga, ch. ii.: and the Gula-Thing's code in Dasent's Preface, p. lii.

precincts] 'Ve-bönd': 'hallowed cords'; also the space thus enclosed. For the Icelandic courts Dasent's Preface may be consulted, p. cxl., etc. The Saga here gives a full description of a suit.

captive of war] Much the same had been said of Hildirida. But in her case there had been no reconciliation between the two families as there had in this.

CH. LVIII.—*like*] This might suggest that Egil in the morning dimness thought he was casting a spear at the king. Else why is the likeness mentioned? But Egil's verse shows that he at all events knew very soon that it was Kettle whom he had slain.

loops] Either of a strap or withe fastened to the thole-pin. In the same way the Athenian sailors had oar-thongs (*τροπωτῆρας*).

Frey and Njord] Givers of wealth. In Arinbjorn's-drápa 18 the same two deities are said to have enriched Arinbjorn.

CH. LIX.—*Harold*] This making over of the kingdom would fall in 930: Harold's death in 933. The suit at the Gula-Thing in 934; and all up to Skallagrim's death. Hacon, one of Eric's brothers, was all this time with Athelstan; he thus escaped Eric's cruelty, and was accepted as king in the winter of this same year.

CH. LX.—*must not drink less*] A rivalry in potations evidently: they were hard drinkers these Norsemen.

let the sword hang] Just the same do earl Atli and Egil in their combat in ch. lxviii.

Forest-foe] This stave is very spirited: the sense is plain: the kennings poetical. One sees as in a picture the Viking exulting as his barque plunges on: it reminds one rather of the German ballad 'Du Recke, wohin im Sturmgebraus?'

CH. LXI.—*Death of Skallagrim*] A curious and interesting chapter. Skallagrim and Egil are alike in a certain hoarding propensity: the last act of the life of each was to hide money. There is a case of burial very like that of Skallagrim in the 'Ere-dwellers': upon which Magnusson has an instructive note, giving much of the passage about the breaking through

the wall and carrying the corpse that way out, and not by the door. Such a precaution was (they say) to prevent the ghost of the dead coming back to haunt the house.

CH. LXII.—*to flee the land*] This was in 935: no news of this could reach Iceland (as we are told below), hence in the next year, 936, Egil is surprised to find Eric at York. The marriage of Eric's daughter to earl Arnfinn is probably misplaced: it could not have been in 935, but some years later. Eric can hardly have had a marriageable daughter yet: besides, it is elsewhere said that Ragnhildr was married to Arnfinn after Eric's death; *i.e.*, after 950.

government of Northumberland] About Eric's government in Northumberland there are some obscurities. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle is silent about his rule there for Athelstan. But accepting this as true, it is probable that he lost this rule on Athelstan's death (940). In Edred's reign (948) we find 'king Eadred harried over all Northumberland because they had taken Eric for their king' (A.-S. Chr.). And a line or two further, 'when the king was homeward, the army within York (Eric's) overtook him, and there made great slaughter.' Then was the king so indignant, that he would again march in and totally destroy the country. When the Northumbrian "witan" understood that, they forsook Eric, and made compensation for the deed to king Eadred.' Then again 'the Northumbrians received Eric, Harold's son': and later 'expelled Eric.' The dates given in the Chronicle (Thorpe's translation) reach down to 954: some modern chronologers think his, Eric's, death was in 950. It is plain that after he lost Norway he was several times in and out of Northumberland. This quite agrees with what we know of the disturbed state of things there. And there is no reason to doubt that Eric's first 'innings' in Northumberland came as our Saga gives it.

came . . . evening] Egil's ride would be about fifty miles or more.

keen glance] Egil speaks of the king's terrible look in st. 5 of the Epic on Arinbjorn.

who . . . teasing] No 'ertinga-madr': a man who stands no nonsense. In the eastern counties such irritable persons are termed 'short-waisted.'

a swallow] Of course, though it is not so said, Gunnhilda is 'the swallow' whose shape flits away presently.

CH. LXIII.—*No one will call*] Arinbjorn appeals to the king's nobler feelings throughout: Gunnhilda to his meaner nature. Arinbjorn's pleading is manly, free, truthful, well argued. The whole scene at York is wonderfully well given.

Head-ransom] Höfud-lausn. The earliest complete 'Drápa' that we have. Different editors divide it differently. Petersen divides it into three main parts. 1. Introduction of five stanzas. 2. Middle part of ten stanzas. 3. Third part of five stanzas. And the middle part he further divides into three subdivisions with an initial burden *omkvæd* ($1+3\times3=10$). The more natural arrangement seems to be to consider three stanzas (1-3) introduction: then there are four sets of two stanzas and a burden: then two stanzas (which have no burden in our text): then a conclusion of two stanzas (or three if the short stanza at the end be genuine).

In sense the first three are plainly introductory, asking for silence, etc.: the last two (or three) are conclusory. They are thus arranged in Thordarson's edition: except that he puts no 'fyrsta stefja-mal' at head of st. 4.

The poem has both rhyme and alliteration throughout. It is indeed a wonderful composition if completed within a night: but it is striking any way. It may be noticed that while there is great variety of phrase for Eric's battles and exploits, we can gather very little that is definite about

them, where they were, or when. This might be partly because Egil was an unwilling eulogist. But probably Eric's rule, while cruel, was yet in some respects weak, and his battles perhaps in no very worthy cause. It has been supposed by some that Egil was all the while laughing in his sleeve, and meant not to praise Eric heartily: but this seems hardly probable. For Egil no doubt meant to do his best to save his own head; and Eric was personally brave and warlike. Arinbjorn's loyalty to Eric shows that Eric had good points in his character; but Gunnhilda was his prompter to evil. 'The king will not let himself be egged on to all thy dastardly work,' said Arinbjorn to the queen. Hence we may suppose Egil to be heartily praising what he would heartily appreciate, valour in war.

St. 1. *when . . . icefloses broke*] In the spring of the year. The expression might denote either the 'when,' or the where (from Iceland); indeed, it comprises both.

2. *Odin's mead*] One of the numerous expressions for 'poetry.'

3. *Od:n saw*] Rumour tells much; but Odin the war-god alone knows, and the inspired poet can therefore best tell. So Homer invokes the Muses to tell him of the battle, 'ye are present everywhere and see, we only hear the rumour, and do not know' (*ημεῖς δὲ κλέος οἷον ἀκούομεν οὐδέ τι οἴμεν*).

4. *Swell'd*] Here begins the middle part and substance of the eulogy.

5. *Of men*] The first burden, repeated with part changed in st. 9.

8. *Odin's oaks*] Warriors. The 'kennings' in this poem present little difficulty, being poetical metaphors, 'ice-of-sword-belt' is the exact 'kenning' for sword here.

10. *Scotland's scourge*] 'Eric was Athelstan's keeper of the land against the Scots.'

11. *Ogress steed*] In the Edda an ogress is spoken of as thus horsed.

12. *Axe*] Another burden, varied in st. 15.

13. *Strings sang*] Λίγξε βίος, νευρή δὲ μέγ' ἵαχεν, ἀλτο δ' ὄιστρός. Hom.

14. *East*] Eric's prowess in Northumberland, or about the Scotch coast and isles, would be reckoned as exploits 'in the west': their fame would therefore travel east to Norway: not strictly so to Iceland perhaps. But Egil was much in Norway.

15. *Bees wound-bearing*] 'Unda-by': wound-bees. The word 'by' seldom occurs: 'by-fluga' is mod. Icel. for 'bee.' 'Stinging arrows' is natural enough: and the hum of the twanging string and whizz of the arrow justify Egil's phrase as most suggestive and poetical.

16. *Weapons*] He rouses the goddess of battles when he goes to fight: Bellona then knows that battle is toward.

17. *Frodi's flour*] Or 'meal': this 'kenning' rests on a passage in the Edda.

18. *crowned*] This stanza ends the fifth 'stefja-mal.' It appears to take the place of a 'stef' or 'burden' with which the others end.

19. *heart's ground*] Egil at all events professes sincerity.

20. *hear*] Egil spoke in a high tone and at once got a silent hearing, we are told. The half verse that follows in most editions is according to the best critics not genuine, a much later addition. The literal rendering of it is 'May he enjoy gold-rings, as Bragi did his eye, as the whale does the firth, ship does the haven, the raven the battle!' It is a wish of wealth to Eric or someone; the meaning of the sentence about Bragi is obscure. The translator in 'Corpus Poeticum Boreale' takes a different reading and rendering.

Ch. LXIV.—*in features loathly*] Cf. st. 7 of Arinbjornar-drápa, 'Not well-favoured seemed my head,' etc.

21. *Dragvandil*] The descent of the sword Dragvandil from one giver to

another is like the descent of the sceptre in Homer, 'Iliad,' *β.* 102. The sceptre passes from Hephaestus to Zeus, Hermes, Pelops, Atreus, Thystes, Agamemnon ; the sword from Kettle Hæng to Grim, Thorolf, Skallagrim, Thorolf, Arinbjorn, Egil. As to the meaning of *Dragvandil*, the Arna-Magnæan editor gives two in Latin, *vibrari consuetus* and *periculum afferens*, 'wont to be drawn' and 'bringing danger.' Whether either is satisfactory, seems doubtful. There are many compounds of *vöndr* 'wand' used for sword : might not the last half of *Dragvandil* be this? 'Draw-wand' would be as natural a kenning for sword as many of the compounds with 'wand.'

CH. LXV.—*foresight*] Something more than mere wisdom is meant by this expression ; something like the 'second sight' of the Scotch.

to London] Now coming into prominence apparently as a royal seat. Alfred repairs it in 886 : Edward occupies it in 911 (Freeman).

wheat and honey] The same kind of freight is brought from England in ch. xvii.

CH. LXVI.—*cast a stone*] A proverbial way of expressing rivalry with a stronger power, against which in the generation before Kveldulf had warned Thorolf.

gaps] The same phrase is used by Egil in *Sona-torrek*, st. 6, *sonar-skard* 'gap of a son.'

CH. LXVII.—*my bounden duty*] Egil well requites hospitality : this was also for Arinbjorn's sake.

sang a stave] Jónsson doubts the genuineness of this stave and the two next.

boundary-stones] Ljot appears to break this rule presently. Perhaps, however, some time limit was set to a 'round,' after which a combatant might go outside the boundary.

a foreigner] Ljot was a foreigner : so Egil did not get the land. But as the land was unjustly taken by Ljot from natives, it would seem rather hard that neither they nor Egil should reap benefit. The case seems to have been arguable : Arinbjorn, as will appear in ch. lxxi., thought Egil had some law on his side, but that he would not succeed.

little mourned] Everyone was against Berserks. There is a curious case in the 'Ere-dwellers' of Berserks being utilized to build a causeway, then unscrupulously put to death. Giants and the like seem looked on as makers of causeways : of bridges and dykes sometimes even the devil is (in popular legend) the maker.

CH. LXVIII.—*the oath of twelve men*] This apparently would have made Atli's case good, but for the appeal to arms. Before, against Bergonund, there were twelve to swear on Egil's side, through the help of Arinbjorn : but Arinbjorn was now in England.

He was experienced] This appears to have been the hardest fight against one opponent that Egil ever had. The resource by which Egil secures the victory was almost exactly reproduced in a combat between a Cameron of Lochiel and an officer in General Monk's army. They fell, the Englishman uppermost, who, while making a violent effort to extricate himself from Lochiel's grip, in order to stab him, gave his foe a chance, 'who swift as a tiger seized his prey by the throat, tearing away the piece with his mouth, the sweetest mouthful, as he used to relate, that he had ever had in his lifetime' (Black's 'Scotland,' p. 523).

CH. LXIX.—*years not a few*] Twelve, from 938 950. All the children are mentioned first in this chapter. But very likely one of the daughters was born between 927 and 932 when Egil was at home before. Thorgerdr

appears to have been married soon after Egil's final return in 952: indeed, both she and Bera were married before Bodvar's death in 960.

CH. LXX.—*Eric . . . had fallen]* 950 or thereabouts was the year of his death: Athelstan died in 940.

CH. LXXI.—*the king's treasury]* A neat proverb '*rumr ingangs en throngr brott-farar.*'

He must tend] I who live in Norway must bend to Norway's king.

CH. LXXII.—*intersected]* This description of the flat country and its dykes is surely by one who had seen such. It is not quite plain what the 'large stakes or poles' were for. The old editor says '*partim palis defixis (vallis) arva circum sepiabant.*' But this sense would surely have been more clearly expressed by our Saga-writer by *skid-gard*, or some such word. More likely the large stakes were set in the dykes here and there to support and strengthen the banks; perhaps where the bridges were.

his shield behind] So he describes Eric as doing in Headransom, st. 14.

Arinbjorn went] This is the last we see of him in the Saga.

CH. LXXIII.—*Vermaland]* In the south of Sweden.

cleared] '*versis silvis ad cultum humanum accommodaverat*' is a note in the old edition. The nickname 'tree-cutter' one may suppose was given to Olaf from his energy as a pioneering backwoodsman. That there was still much work for the axe to do is plain from the description of the forest country through which Egil makes his way.

Arnvid] It is mentioned in 'Njalssaga,' ch. v., that 'Arnvid had kept back the taxes from Hacon Athelstane's fosterchild, and both father and son had fled away from Jemaland to Gothland.'

a sending to death] 'forsending': the prefix has much the same force in some words as the German *ver in verrathen*, etc. The mission we may say was something in purpose like Bellerophon's with the 'fatal tokens.'

CH. LXXIV.—*sledges]* We come upon quite a different scene in this winter journey: a very graphic one of the horses floundering in the snow, etc.

no beer] The same treatment and deceit as in the case of Bard, ch. xlvi. The rites of hospitality were much prized in those rude times, and any infringement of them resented.

CH. LXXV.—*Helga]* There is a curious mixture of superstition and common-sense in Egil's prescription and treatment of the invalid. We shall see in ch. lxxix, that the runes had been wrongly written by a suitor.

leek-tending] This is one explanation of the kenning 'leek-linden' for a woman; that women had to look after the kitchen-garden with leeks, etc., in it.

CH. LXXVI.—*six men]* those spoken of in last chapter: two parties, one seen by Thorfinn, one by his house-carle.

CH. LXXVIII.—*Egil took]* A most remarkable resource by way of defensive armour. In the note to the Arna-Magnæan edition a similar expedient is quoted from another Saga.

fresh as ever] The expression is *spán-nyir* 'span-new': the 'span' being as in 'spick and span.' *Spánn* means 'chip': but the compound seems to be used of quite other things than wood: e.g., of wine.

CH. LXXIX.—*Gautland]* part of western Sweden; written sometimes 'Gothland' and 'Gottland.'

for that winter] Nor indeed did he go abroad any more.

CH. LXXX.—*in the district]* A paragraph about a Kettle Gufa and his family has been omitted, as it does not bear upon Egil's history. And all the marriages of Egil's children have been thrown into this chapter, so as to begin ch. lxxxi, with Bodvar's death.

Olaf] He and his come into the Laxdæla-Saga. These marriages appear to have been soon after Egil's return : certainly before 960. Asgerdr, if married in 953-5, was probably born before 933 ; see note on ch. lxix.

CH. LXXXI.—*Reykjar-hamar*] A 'hamar' is a rock, beetling crag.

nones] Three in the afternoon. As an ecclesiastical word, this of course came in after Egil's lifetime. The earlier method of marking time was by sunrise, day-meal, sunset, night-meal.

Thorgerdr] The daughter honours her father, makes at first as though she would die with him, then gets him to chew and drink, then suggests a poem, and so wins him back to life. Baring-Gould in his interesting book on Iceland has a translation of this scene, as also of Sona-torrek very freely rendered into English verse.

Hardly can Thorstein] Thorstein was younger than Bodvar, and Gunnar came between them. Thorstein would probably be quite three years younger than Bodvar, and about thirteen years old at this time. In Vigfusson's chronological table Thorstein is put as born about 950. We cannot tell exactly the years of the children's birth, but most of them must have been born 938-950. But Vigfusson puts the drowning of Bodvar and Sona-torrek in 975. How can this be? For Bodvar is distinctly said to come first of the sons, Thorstein to be the youngest. And nothing is plainer than that Bodvar was not come to full manhood when Sona-torrek was composed : but according to Vigfusson he would be some twenty-eight years old! Jónsson's arrangement seems better : Bodvar born 943, Thorstein 945, Sona-torrek 960. A rather larger interval, however, is probable between Bodvar and Thorstein. And the exact date of Sona-torrek must remain uncertain : only it is plain that Bodvar was not older than sixteen or seventeen. As two daughters came before Bodvar, 943 is perhaps full early for his birth, unless we suppose a daughter born while Egil was at home between 927-32.

Sona-torrek] 'Loss of sons.' Or, if *Sonar-torrek*, 'loss of a son.' The poem is mainly on Bodvar, at least, he is the occasion of it ; but Egil had lost Gunnar as well.

Some renderings in this translation of Sona-torrek differ from those in *Corpus Poeticum Boreale*. But the text there differs from that of Thordarson, which has been here mainly followed ; as have also his interpretations.

Sona-torrek is certainly the most remarkable of Egil's poems. There is a deep pathos running through the whole : it has coherence and plan throughout, though this is obscured by corrupt passages. It is unlike most other Icelandic poems. The train of thought is as follows :

'How can I utter words? how essay song? (1-2). A blameless son I have lost : I hear the waves beating on his and my father's tomb : my kindred fall away : how can I be gay and sing? (3-4). My father is gone : my mother : sad theme for poetry ! Now is the worst breach made in my house by the sea : my noble son cut off (5-7). Could I avenge him I would, but none can wreak vengeance on such resistless power. And I am growing old and lone (8-9). The shield of my house is gone : had he come to manhood he had been a mighty warrior. He was ever dutiful, my hope and stay (10-12). Now recall I the earlier loss of my brother Thorolf. Nought else can replace son to father, brother to brother (13-15). Few now see I in the land faithful and true : brother slays brother : deceit is rife. Some live in peace, but in selfishness. Happier are the dead (16-17). Odin hath dealt hardly with me : first by sickness I lost a son : for him, fair branch, still I grieve (18-20). Once I deemed Odin my friend : he helped my spear. Now he fails in my need. Worship I will pay him no more (21-22). Yet some good hath he given for evil : him I thank for poesy, for wit to see and

expose falsehood (22-23). Wherefore, though hard beset, I will patiently wait till Death lay me by my loved ones in the tomb on Digr-a-ness.'

St. 1. *Poesy*] Odin stole poesy from the giants. See also st. 2.

3. *He who*] Commentators give up as desperate the first four lines. Some suppose they continue the mythological account of the origin of poetry. Ought they not rather to state the subject, Egil's loss? There is the word 'blameless,' and the word 'boat,' and that is about all that is certainly intelligible. The translator has ventured to suppose Bodvar the 'blameless' one (cf. st. 19 for words about Gunnar's guilelessness); and the 'boat' to be the luckless boat that caused his death.

It is agreed that the last four lines of st. 3 mean that Egil hears the beating of the wave on the tomb of his father upon Digr-a-ness. The blood flowing from a slain giant Ymir formed the sea according to the Edda.

6. *gap*] The same word was used by Hacon in ch. lxvi. of the loss inflicted by Egil's kin on Harold's house.

7. *strand*] So Eric is called in ch. lxii. 'strong strand of Harold's family.'

11. *laid hand*] *i.e.*, had he lived to reach his full warrior strength. Others (less probably) interpret the four lines 'had he lived to reach manhood before Odin took him away by death.'

13. *brotherless*] By the death of Thorolf. But some refer this to Arinbjorn. *weak-winged*] Or 'faltering in flight.' He means that he often misses Thorolf. He said that he should often rue his loss: ch. liv.

15, 16] With these as usually arranged there seems no coherence. With the transposition of stanzas 15 and 16 all seems to hang together. Brotherlessness, sonlessness take up 13-15: then complaint of the degeneracy of the times, 16-17.

17. *bees' home*] Or 'beehive': *býskip* may be the English 'bee-skep' or 'bee-skip,' which is common for beehive in provincial English. Egil having been much in England would probably have heard the word; nor is there any strong proof that it would not have been understood by his hearers. Or *skip* might be taken as 'covering, vault, dome' (*σκέπας*): and the rendering be 'bee-dome.' It is at any rate more likely that *býskip* (even if 'bees' ship') means 'bee-hive,' than that 'ship of bees' means the sky or heaven, because bees live there. Nor does it seem very far-fetched to compare the realms of the swarming countless dead to a 'beehive.' Some northern scholars think that for *býskip*s should be some other word, a name of Odin, then 'the home of Odin' would of course be heaven, *i.e.*, Valhalla. But it is questionable if it be necessary to suppose the text corrupt.

[The passage was discussed by the translator in a paper read before the Camb. Phil. Soc.]

18. *drooping brow*] Cf. the description of Egil at Athelstan's board after Thorolf's death on Vinheath, ch. iv.

19. *a son*] Gunnar.

20. *friend of men*] Odin: so also are 'Vilir's brother,' and 'Mimir's friend' below.

22. *Now victim*] A curious renunciation. No more will I worship one who fails at need.

boot for bale] As an after-thought Egil bethinks him that he has some compensation in poetry. So he will be patient, and, while not hurrying death, will welcome it. Of Egil's delight in poetry we hear in the next chapter, where he and another poet make friends.

24. *Of Odin's captive*] Hela was sister of the monster wolf of northern mythology.

CH. LXXXII.—*King Hacon*] His rule, here said to be long, was for

twenty-six years according to his Saga. He came to Norway in 934, his death was in 960 or 961. We should suppose it after Bodvar's death from our Saga. A very interesting account of the fight at Fitjar, where Hacon faced great odds, is given in Hacon's Saga. Eight sons of Harold Fairhair are said to have fallen in battle before Hacon fell.

Arinbjorn] He joined Eric's sons nine years before, as we saw ch. lxxii.

A part thereof] How much more there was, we cannot exactly determine. There is no appearance of incompleteness in the first twenty-four stanzas (except a few lines lost in 12 and 23-24). The poem begins with a sketch of Egil's own principles and early fortunes: then he comes to the great danger of his life at Eric's court in England, in which Arinbjorn saved him. This he treats of fully: then goes on to praises which lie ready and plentiful. First he tells of his generosity; and of this he speaks much. Then we should expect much about his warlike prowess: he had been on free-booting expeditions with Egil, had fought much for Eric and his sons, 'was a great warrior and a victorious.' But there is nothing: 'a large gap,' says Petersen. The whole 'drápa' may have been of sixty stanzas: this is mentioned as a not unusual length in Vigfusson's Dict.

st. 3. *Yngling's son*] Yngling is a proper name of a descendant of Odin, to whom the kings of Norway traced back their pedigree. So that the phrase about matches Homer's 'Zeus-born kings.'

hood of daring] Egil we are told 'took a bold heart' and rode to York to Arinbjorn's.

6. *bolster-mate*] i.e., head. There are some other explanations of this kenning and of the lines: but the whole must be meant of the *Höfudlausn*.

7. *Not beauteous*] Just what Egil said in ch. lxiv. He now goes on to describe his head and all its parts in very curious kennings: 'hood-knoll' or 'hat-knoll,' etc.

8. *pit-holes*] i.e., his eye-sockets or eyes.

9. *Tooth-fence*] ἔρκος ὀδόντων. The inner and outer part of the ear are next described.

11. *framed no lies*] Arinbjorn's bold truthfulness before Eric was remarkable.

12. *Of the stay*] This stanza is corrupt: but the general opinion is that it alludes to what Harold Fairhair said about Thorolf the elder, whose death he pronounced to be a great loss.

13. *Wrong*] 'Twere wrong that such help were wasted in vain,' is the whole sense: 'thrown to the seas' is curiously amplified. But not very unlike is Horace's *tristitiam et metus tradam protervis in mare Creticum portare ventis*.

15. *Now*] The debt of gratitude paid, I go on to further praises.

16. *voice-plane*] Cf. 'song-pounder' in st. 1 of Sona-torrek.

17. *hearth-fire*] This kenning has been noticed in the Introduction, p. x., as one of the riddle kind.

20. The last part of this stanza is of uncertain text and meaning.

21. *Few*] Arinbjorn is generous, which is rare: he is friendly and suits everyone: which is rare. To repair with shaft broken spears, etc., may have been a not uncommon duty of a host to his guests in a break-spear age.

23. *Draupnir*] The ring which Odin laid on Baldur's pyre: 'it was such that every ninth night eight gold rings of the same weight dropped therefrom.' As good as the gold-egg-laying goose.

23, 24. It is not certain how these lines should be arranged. But it looks as if the chief gap should come here. The stanza 25, 'Long course of life,' would come best after some description of Arinbjorn's warlike exploits.

: 26. *To stand*] A poem to live in men's memory among other buildings of poetry. *Exegi monumentum aere perennius regalique situ pyramidum altius.* Hor. Bragi was the Apollo of the north.

CH. LXXXIII.—*Einar*] This friendship of the two poets is interesting. *One with eight*] These exploits were in Friesland and Eida-wood, chs. lxxii. and lxxviii.

King Harold fell] Some put this in 965, some in 969, some in 975. Einar's gift of the shield Jónsson puts in 970. The Saga does not profess to put all these facts about Skála-glam in exact chronological order. His poem Vell-ekla is said to have been later by chronologers. *Skála-glam* seems to mean 'tinkling bowl,' or 'tinkle of bowls'; but is it a name of praise or blame? Clanging bowls, beakers' clang are the accompaniment of feasts: is it that minstrels also are there found?

isle-studded] Fit term for sea in that region of fjords and isles.

slay him] Hard measure. It is said that the giver of a present reckoned himself above the receiver, and that Egil was offended at this idea. But Egil accepted gifts from many, and probably gave gifts too. As Egil did after all write about the shield, and remained Einar's friend, perhaps the threat was half in jest. At any rate he did not ride after him.

CH. LXXXIV.—*loved him little*] He was too quiet for his taste. But Thorstein bore him bravely in the quarrel with Steinar, and Egil helped him by his decision, and after that they were more friendly.

Asgerdr] About 973.

CH. LXXXV.—*Aunund*] Son of Ani, one of Skallagrim's followers, whence Ana-brekka 'Ani's brink' was named. The quarrel that follows is rather a petty one, but Egil as arbitrator makes about his last public appearance, being then nearly, if not quite, eighty years old.

CH. LXXXVI.—*roofed their booths*] The walls of these Thing booths were fixtures, but new roofed each season.

fighting horses] To match horses in fight was a favourite sport then: it is mentioned in the 'Njala.'

tongue of Odd] By this he means to jest upon Odd's nickname of Tongue. But query whether Odd were so called from his speaking power, or because he lived on a tongue of land?

shape and shear] i.e., do with it as you please.

Thing-banquet] provided by the priest.

went out] In a sort of procession to the law-hill. On such an occasion Thorstein spoiled his father's cloak, ch. lxxxiv.

CH. LXXXVII.—*fitting days*] The fixed days for 'moving house': four days at the end of May.

this judgment] As between Thorstein and Steinar, the judgment seems right: Steinar began the wrong, and persisted in it despite of Thorstein's forbearance. But one wishes that Egil had treated an old comrade's son with leniency for auld lang syne, especially when Aunund had reposed such trust in him. It is, however, a mark of the truthfulness of the Saga-writer that Egil's overbearing use of power is not cloaked.

CH. LXXXVIII.—*we must lengthen*] They were to take two sides of a triangle instead of one. Thorstein did not choose to meet the superior force.

CH. XC.—*haltered horse*] It is not quite clear why a haltered or tethered horse (as the word is explained) should stumble. Does it mean a horse 'hobbled' by a cord round the legs?

let us forbear] Egil is more civil than the cook. 'Bask' is by origin reflexive from 'bake,' as appears in the Icelandic form. 'Fire-maid' literally 'fire-goddess.'

Feet] There is an untranslateable pun here. Egil uses *ekkjur* which means 'widows': but *hæll* which means 'widow' means also 'heel.' *Ekkjur* is meant to suggest *hæla*, then that to express 'heels.'

first days of Hacon] Hacon reigned from 975 to 995. If his 'first days' be taken to mean the first five years or so of his reign, Egil was eighty odd years old about 980 or before. Suppose him born in 898 (Munch's date), this would be so; or with Jónsson's date of birth 901 he would be eighty ('in his ninth decade') by 981, and this may equally suit. Vigfusson takes as the text *ofan-verdum* 'last, later' instead of *öndverdum* 'first, earlier.' And he puts Egil's birth in 904: thus he would be eighty in 984, and Vigfusson supposes him to die about 990. — The earlier date for his birth appears better for the early incidents of the Saga. But one cannot determine precisely the age meant by 'in his ninth ten': whether 'just past eighty' or well on for ninety. Critically (according to Jónsson) *öndverdum* is the better reading. And with this it would seem that in the early years of Hacon's reign Egil entered on his ninth decade. But how much longer he lived one cannot determine: Jónsson thinks not later than 983. As he was 'hale and hearty save for blindness,' his death may have been several years after the beginning of his eighties; the Saga does not profess to give all the events of his old age year by year. One may be pretty sure he did not live to be over ninety.

One summer] A curious freak of the old man: one more fight he wished to see. As they would not let him have his way, he would not let them have the money.

slain Grim's thralls] How? For he was old, blind, encumbered with the chests.

CH. XCI.—*baptized when, etc.*] i.e., in 1000.

Egil moved] As 'prim-signed' Egil might be buried in the outskirts of the churchyard.

Skapti] Priest from 1143 onwards.

wave-marked] Like a mussel-shell, Petersen says.

CH. XCII.—*two types*] Fair and handsome, dark and ugly. The Thorolfs were, in the Saga, of the handsome type; perhaps Bodvar was so.

Skuli] His great-grandson Einar is suggested as a not improbable compiler of the Saga.

Iron Ram] 'A ship beaked with iron.' So 'barded' is used of horses in armour. This ship of Eric's is described elsewhere.

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